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SKETCHES  
OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE,  
FROM THE  
FOURTEENTH TO THE PRESENT CENTURY.

BY  
CLARA LUCAS BALFOUR,  
AUTHOR OF  
"MORAL HEROISM," "WOMEN OF SCRIPTURE," "HAPPY EVENINGS,"  
ETC. ETC.

---

"Thus Genius rose and set, at ordered times,  
And shot a day-spring into distant climes."—COWPER.

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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages aim at presenting in a familiar and compendious form a general sketch of the progress of our English Literature since the revival of letters in Europe until our own time. Many voluminous and admirable works have treated this subject in its different departments at large. The general or the young reader, however, who is but just beginning to select from, and to feel an interest in, our standard literature; and the female reader who snatches from daily duties brief opportunities for reading, can scarcely be expected or induced to go at once to studies so comprehensive. To these, it is thought, a book would be useful that aims to lead them by a plain path to the sources of the stream of modern English literature, and marks out to them its fertilising and



rapid course through the four last, and most important, centuries.

Considerable prominence has been given in these pages to the labours of poets. Because great poets not only give form, power, and beauty to a nation's language, but feed the secret springs that render its general literature copious and varied.

The desire of the writer is to stimulate rather than to satisfy a love of reading, and a taste for the writings of our best authors; and to point out names and events that have either constituted important literary eras in our land, or led to the mental advancement of the people.

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SKETCHES  
OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is no sight that more powerfully carries back the thoughts to the olden time than an old library. I do not mean merely an old building, nor a collection of old books,—not a show-place, nor an elaborate modern antique,—but a veritable library of the olden time. There is a sight of this kind at the little town of Wimborne, in Dorsetshire. The old Minster of that place, bearing witness to the architectural skill and taste both of the Saxon and the Norman era, has much to delight the antiquarian in its structure, its ornaments, its traces of successive enlargements, marked by obvious changes of style, its monuments, and its historical associations. But nothing to my mind was so interesting as a chamber in one of the

towers that was called "The Library." The room was square and well proportioned, though by no means large; two windows, of a sort of casement form, more suited to an old house than a church tower, and evidently very much more modern than the walls, admitted plenty of light; and round the three other sides of the room were rough-looking massive shelves, containing tarnished dilapidated books of all sorts, sizes, and colours, in clumsy but strong bindings, now sadly tattered, and in many cases dropping to pieces with age. Here were black-letter tomes—still older beautifully written manuscripts; specimens of early printing in the Roman character, that so soon triumphed over the black letter; a fine old polyglott Bible, in many volumes; and separate copies of the Scriptures—some in the original tongues, and some Latin, and early English, translations.

The greatest peculiarity, however, was not the books, but the way they were secured. An iron rod went along the edge of each shelf, and was fastened at the end by a huge padlock. Each book had a chain screwed on to one of the covers (as we often see the Bible fastened to the desk in very old churches), and at the other end of the chain was a ring that ran on the locked iron rod. For the convenience of reading any of these venerable volumes thus guarded from removal, there

was a portable desk and stool, which the reader could bring near any shelf, and, sitting sufficiently close for the chained book to rest upon the desk, he could peruse the volume there, and there only.

Nothing could appear more strange than the rusty iron chains hanging so thickly from the shelves — it seemed the prison rather than the home of the books. And this in olden times was the town library ! It is probable that Wimborne was honoured above most towns of its size, not only by having its noble Minster, but by its possessing a public library of any kind. It is true that even from the early part of the sixteenth century it had a great advantage in its admirable school, which was founded by the illustrious Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII., a woman who was deservedly called “the Mother of the Students of the Universities.” And the probability is, that the townspeople, as books slowly increased, were tolerably competent to understand, and likely to value them.

There is a fine copy of Sir Walter Raleigh’s “History of the World” in this old library, and local tradition attaches an interesting anecdote to this book. It is said the poet Prior used to read here often ; and once when poring over the book in question on a winter evening, he fell asleep, and the candle, falling from the tin sconce of the desk upon the middle of the open book, burned slowly



a round hole through it may be a hundred pages, rather more than less. The smoke of the smouldering paper aroused the weary student. A hand would have been sufficient to cover the damage and put out the fire, — and probably in this way it was extinguished. We may imagine, however, the dismay at the mischief done to a book, costly even now, but then of much higher monetary value. The pains taken to remedy the defect marks the value in which the book was held. Pieces of writing paper, about the size of half-a-crown, are very neatly pasted into the holes, and the words needed to supply the sense are transcribed from the memory, and, it is said, in the handwriting of Prior.

How strangely does this old library, with its rusty drapery of iron chains, hanging in dismal festoons from the shelves, contrast with the public libraries of the present time. And yet more remarkable, as a sign of intellectual progress, is the difference now in the price of books of the highest intrinsic value and importance. The chains are broken; the illustrious prisoners, so long fettered and kept from intercourse with the people, are free. They have spread over the land and multiplied, and found a welcome with high and low, rich and poor —

“Their thoughts in many a memory,  
Their home in many a heart.”

The danger to the reader in the present time, — the young reader more particularly, — does not arise from scarcity, but repletion. Copious, yet desultory, reading, without plan or system, is the error of the inexperienced in our day. Many love to linger near the stream of knowledge, yet care not to trace its course, and to note its fertilising progress: they have no systematic and consecutive notion of the rise and progress of modern literature. Many general readers, who have the most accurate chronological knowledge in reference to kings and queens, have but a confused notion of the eras that have occurred in literature, and their effects, not merely on the few, but on the many. A clear, plain, untechnical record and analysis of literature would be more a history of the peoples of the earth, their progress, their revolutions, and their decline, than any thing that is ordinarily dignified with the name of history: for, as it is thought that really governs the world, the greatest thinkers have been ultimately the mightiest rulers, and the noblest conquerors. Such a work, however, would not only demand universal knowledge and a philosophical mind in the writer, but time and study from the reader; conditions not often possessed by either. It occurred to me, however, in the old library at Wimborne Minster that a series of plain consecutive sketches, however rapid and panoramic,

of our literature, would be useful to general and to young readers, by collecting information for them which they would have had to seek from many varied sources, and giving them a clear and distinct, even if limited, view of the progress of mind in their own land from the middle of the fourteenth century.

It is not enough that we read the works of great men of former ages; it is necessary to our full appreciation and enjoyment of their writings that we know something of the times in which they lived, and of the books that preceded theirs. It will help us to a humbler view of our present attainments, and a fitter sense of our present responsibilities, when we behold the triumphs of mind, amid the difficulties of past ages, and what treasures of thought our ancestors bequeathed to us.

It will be an instructive, and I would hope interesting, part of this view taken of the progress of our literature, that the contributions from the mind of woman to the cause of human improvement are not left out, or slurred over, in these sketches. Those contributions prior to the last century, it will be found, were few in number, and not often first-rate in quality. But when we remember the comparatively limited education that woman has received, the paramount and ever-recurring duties of domestic life, and, more than

all, the law of opinion that operated to restrict her mental efforts, as much as her literary acquirements, the wonder is, not that woman in former ages contributed so little to our literature, but that she should have ventured to contribute at all.

Another thought that was suggested to me by the sight of the old library of chained books at Wimborne I venture to lay before my reader:—When the student had to go to his books, carrying desk and seat to the shelf where they were fastened, did he not value them all the more for the hinderances that impeded his easy enjoyment of their contents? Granted that the careless many neither could or would invade and share that prison, yet with what zest the studious few would pore over those manacled volumes, careless of the constrained attitude, the cold, the gloom, and the many discomforts that must then have condemned every student, whatever his station, to a “pursuit of knowledge under difficulties.” Do we by our warm fire-sides,—in comfortable easy chairs,—books in abundance coming like a full tide into our dwellings,—do we read as carefully as students then read? Have we gained a full knowledge of the recorded thoughts of any of our great writers? Have we not skimmed and dipped, rather than read and reflected? and, while wisdom and expediency would both subscribe to Lord

Bacon's maxim, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested," yet, in our hasty examining, have we rightly discriminated as to the books we should taste, and those we should digest?

Responsibility and privilege are so linked together that none can be guiltless in separating them. If we have more ample means of knowledge than our ancestors, woe be to us if we have not also, as the result, more earnestness and more wisdom!

## CHAPTER I.

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.—RETROSPECT.—ITALY: ITS  
INFLUENCE ON ENGLAND.—WICKLIFFE, CHAUCER,  
GOWER.

THE words "transition age" have passed into a current and popular phrase, often liable, from its very convenience, to be misapplied. We use the term frequently to describe changes of outward manifestation, rather than changes in the characteristics of a period. The fourteenth century may be pre-eminently called a transition age, because its changes have a distinctive character, as marking the transition from the primitive to the modern state of Europe. It was not the actions but the thoughts of that time that were memorable. There was strife, and struggle, and clamour every where, without effecting much immediately for man. Meanwhile a few illustrious thinkers were arising in the South of Europe, and lightening the darkness that had so long spread over the nations.

The important facts of the preceding ages of the Christian era may be comprised in a rapid summary: The decline of the Roman power in

the fifth century ; the incursions, conquests, and final establishment of independent states by peoples of North and Central Europe, who had been called by one contemptuous phrase, "Barbarians," by the polished and luxurious Romans ; the establishment of a Christian Church, not, as in the earlier ages, as a spiritual principle of union to be individually received by faith, but as a political institution of supreme authority ; the feudal system ; the institution of chivalry ; and, lastly, the crusades. Of these, M. Guizot says with equal brevity and force, "They were the first *European event*. Before the crusades the different countries of Europe had never been simultaneously moved by the same cause, or actuated by the same sentiment. Europe as a whole did not exist. The crusades animated all Christian Europe. France supplied the greater portion of the first crusading army ; but Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and English, were also found in its ranks. In the second and third crusades the whole of Christendom was engaged. Nothing like it had ever been seen before.

"This was not all : — Although the crusades were an European event, they were also a national event in each separate country ; all classes were animated by the same impression, yielded to the same idea, and abandoned themselves to the same influence. Kings, nobles, priests, citizens, and

the rural population, all took the same part, the same interest, in the crusades. The moral unity of nations was exhibited, a fact as new as that of European unity."

Each of these facts left its impress on the national mind, and influenced our early literature, whose course we may trace—first, from rude oral metrical compositions of warlike tribes—odes, battle songs, wild and fabulous traditions,—to the written literature of the cloister, treatises, homilies, expositions, doctrinal controversies, legends of martyrs, lives of saints, traditions of miracles—the true and the false, the valuable and the worthless strangely mingled. The wisdom and the reasoning contained in the earlier writings of the Fathers were intended evidently for the learned and the initiated, while the spiritual and mental influence gained over the many was through the passion of fear and the natural appetite for the wonderful. Hence the power and the popularity of wild and degrading superstitions.

The feudal institution, by its injustice and oppression, gave rise to chivalry as its professed antagonist; though it may be questioned whether it was not its ally, even while uttering liberal promises of redress of grievances, protection of the weak, and a particular deference to woman. If most of this was mere profession,



yet external manners were improved; politeness became a principle; and poetry of a tender and complimentary kind began to be uttered in the lays of the troubadours: the mental influence of woman as a judge of such poetry was conceded — a far higher tribute this than that which poets had, time immemorial, paid to her mere external beauty as an inspirer of their muse.

Then the crusades, by bringing the natives of various countries into association, must have enlarged the sympathies and increased the knowledge of all. And the Eastern land they visited, besides giving that kind of local corroboration to Christian belief which is so influential with the general mind, supplied also a store of the graceful and gorgeous fancies of oriental literature, to be transplanted from the East to the West. Hence came the stories of enchantment and of genii that operated as a pleasing variation of the gloomier superstitions of witchcraft and demonology.

Meanwhile in our own land during these times we had had an historian, a statesman, and a conqueror, each of whom had left traces on the language, the literature, the land, and the manners of the nation. The Venerable Bede had given an ecclesiastical history that not only chronicled the darkest period of the past, but was likely in better times to found a taste for historical inquiry. The great Alfred introduced, or at all events more regularly systematised law,

education, and division of land. His legal code, and foundation of the University of Oxford, claim the gratitude of all posterity. The Norman William brought the comparative refinement of a more temperate and polished people to compensate ultimately for his conquest, and to extenuate the memory of his oppression. He was not content, however, with conquering our country; he strove to annihilate its language. Norman-French was the language of politeness, of law, and of education; and for three hundred years the common Saxon, the vernacular language of the country, was prohibited from being taught in the schools. Hence, during that long period, there was positively nothing done towards laying the basis of a national literature. There had been stately ceremonial, gorgeous pageants, heroic or mock-heroic chivalry, courtly minstrelsy, enthusiastic superstition, rude pantomimic shows; still the mind, the *national* mind, slumbered.

At the latter part of the thirteenth century there was great darkness over the whole of Europe; but we from our insular position, and from our being a conquered country, ruled by foreign princes, were less advanced in education and literature than either France or Italy. It is memorable, however, that then in all countries, various enthusiasms had declined. Chivalry had become a name, an order, but it was not a vital reality. The crusades had ceased, and a reaction in which

people wondered at the excitement of the past followed. Some institutions of the church, which had subsisted for ages, were keenly felt as an oppression even by those whose tongues were silent. Monachism had continued from the sixth century ; but now, while its hold was strong on the fears of the people, its influence on their affections had declined. Thought was moving, but yet very slowly, for ignorance checked its progress.

A greater event for Europe than any battle however glorious, or the reign of any sovereign however splendid, was the birth of the poet Dante, the illustrious Florentine, in 1265. This great man was born at a time when Italy was torn by contending factions, and when the church rather fomented than quieted the contest. He was completely mixed up in the politics of the time ; his personal sorrows aggravating the susceptibility of his temper. Very early in life he formed an enthusiastic attachment for Beatrice Portinari, whose early death cast a gloom over his mind from which he never recovered. His subsequent marriage to Gemma Donati is asserted, but on very slight grounds, to have been unhappy ; certain it is, his wife's family were of different opinions to himself on politics, and ultimately became his enemies. Equally fearless and melancholy, the great yet gloomy genius of Dante was destined to exert a mighty influence, not merely on Italy, but on Europe.

We shall best understand the effect of Dante's writings on his own immediate time if we put a supposititious case. Imagine a mighty poet of our own age writing a poem, that told us of the eternal destiny of great and well-known persons recently deceased; that denounced their vices, and showed with terrible distinctness how, in the regions of punishment, they were being tormented; that uttered, like an accusing angel, admonitions and threatenings to the living; that revealed to the awe-struck gaze the invisible world, and, instead of thronging it with angels and demons, gave it a grand and terrible human interest by peopling it with well-known earthly beings. With all our freedom of the press, and our independence of thought, the man who ventured to do that even now, would be feared, hated, persecuted. We should forget the value of the lesson, and think only of the sternness of the teacher. In the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, when popes and potentates ruled over mind and body, we may feebly imagine the electric power of the voice that seemed to come up from the bottomless pit, charged with the wailings of the sad, and the warnings of the tortured. Hitherto poets had sung love strains and war songs, mingling such gentle satire as stimulated, rather than offended. Now, there was a bard with another message. As a piece of merely human composition and secular writing, there had

been nothing presented to the world so original, daring, and awful, as the *DIVINA COMEDIA* (or the epic of the *DIVINE JUSTICE*) of Dante.

It is impossible in a sketch to give any idea of a work that attempts to describe the unseen world with awful minuteness. In accordance with the theology of the time he describes three states: Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. Every image that can fill up the terrible is used to describe the state of the lost.

The inscription on the gates of hell prepares the mind for the horrible scenes he describes in its various gradations of woe:—

“Through me you pass into the city of woe :  
 Through me you pass into eternal pain :  
 Through me among the people lost for aye.  
 Justice the founder of my fabric moved :  
 To rear me was the task of power divine,  
 Supreme wisdom, and primeval love.  
 Before me things create were none, save things  
 Eternal, and eternal I endure :  
 ALL HOPE ABANDON, YE WHO ENTER HERE.”

It was not to be expected that this great man, and sublime genius, so beyond his age, would escape persecution. He was condemned to exile, and sentenced to be *burnt alive* if he returned to Florence. He never did return, but wandered heart-broken for many years in different lands. He says most affectingly, “It pleased the citizens of the fairest and most renowned daughter

of Rome— Florence—to cast me out of her most sweet bosom, where I was born and bred, and passed half of the life of man; and in which, with her good leave, I still desire with all my heart to repose my weary spirit, and finish the days allotted me: and so I have wandered in almost every place to which our language extends, a stranger, almost a beggar, exposing, against my will, the wounds given me by fortune, too often unjustly imputed to the sufferer's fault. Truly, I have been a vessel without sail, and without rudder, driven about upon different shores by the dry wind that springs of dolorous poverty; and hence have I appeared vile in the eyes of many."

Subsequently, he might have returned to his beloved Florence, if he would have compromised his principles.

"No, father," he writes to a friendly ecclesiastic who had communicated the offer, "this is not the way that shall lead me back to my country. I shall return with hasty steps if you, or any other, can open a way that shall not derogate from the honour of Dante. But if by no such way Florence can be entered, then Florence I shall never enter. What! shall I not every where enjoy the sight of the sun and stars? and may I not contemplate, in every corner of the earth under the canopy of heaven, consoling and delightful truth, without first rendering myself

inglorious, nay infamous, to the people and republic of Florence? Bread, I hope, will not fail me."

Yet bread, it is said, did fail him. Poverty, nay worse, dependence, was his mournful lot. Even after his death (1321) his persecutors were not appeased, for his thoughts yet lived — were immortal. The pope held that his work, "*De Monarchia*," struck at the root of priestly power, and it was ordered to be burnt.

Dante set an admirable example to his contemporaries and successors, by writing chiefly in his own vernacular language. To this cause, probably, may be attributed the circumstance that even the common people of Florence knew somewhat of the scope and purport of his awful poem; and that his thoughts, once set free, alighted like electric fire on many a mind, kindling up into a flame the smouldering embers of discontent, and stimulating inquiry. The example thus set was worthily followed.

General readers — women more particularly — have a very indistinct idea of the service rendered to literature by the two great Italians who adorned the period immediately following the death of Dante — Petrarch and Boccaccio. They think of the first as merely a writer of elegant and romantic love sonnets to his Laura, and of the other as the author of some stories that he had better not have

written. This is merely a one-sided view of the great men in question. They were reformers in literature. Ripe scholars, they despised the puerilities of monkish legends and the barbarous style in which they were written,—matter and manner each alike despicable. They resolved to lead the mind of the age back to the treasures of classic antiquity; and, for this purpose, commenced a diligent search after the dispersed writings of the philosophers, poets, and orators of Greece and Rome. Petrarch, in particular, sought to rouse his countrymen from their slumbers: it is said, “He never passed an old convent or monastery without searching its library, or knew of a friend travelling in those quarters where he supposed books to be concealed, without entreaties to procure for him some classical manuscripts.” And Boccaccio restored the study of the Greek language at a time when it was not only dead, but well nigh forgotten.

These two great men arose just in time to save the literary treasures of antiquity from complete destruction. In which latter case, supposing they had excited a love of literature among their countrymen, they could not have gratified it, or have presented models of composition that would form the taste and correct the judgment of that and succeeding ages.

The great cause of the destruction of the writ-



ings of sages of antiquity during the dark ages, was the scarcity and dearness of materials to write upon. The parchment used by ancient writers was of so tough a texture that the writing could be erased or peeled off; and this was often done to make room for some superstitious trash or monkish legend. It is said that ignorant and unprincipled monks not only did this when they wanted to increase their stock of religious works, by original writings: but when they wanted to raise money, they used to sell the parchments on which Greek or Latin works were written, to the bookbinders and racket-makers. Several eminent works were rescued by scholars, that had been sold in this way; others lay neglected and dropping to pieces in monasteries: so that Petrarch and Boccaccio engaged in a noble crusade when they set about rescuing the long-imprisoned and almost forgotten worthies of classic antiquity.

No country can be said to have a national literature so long as their writers choose a foreign language as the medium to convey their thoughts. We have seen that Dante wrote in his own native language, in opposition to the custom then prevailing, that regarded Latin as the language of the ecclesiastic and the scholar, and the Provençal as the language of poetry. Petrarch and Boccaccio, great scholars as they were, and writing admirably in other languages, yet composed in their verna-

cular those works on which their fame principally rests, though probably not those on which they most prided themselves.

The revival of letters in the South of Europe, caused by the grand and marvellous poem of Dante, and by the subsequent literary labours and researches of Petrarch and Boccaccio, had its influence, not only on Europe generally, but on our own island in particular. We also had great men in that age, and were on the eve of great changes of opinion and great triumphs of mind. It was the age of Wickliffe the Reformer, and Chaucer the poet, also a reformer. The first—who was four years the senior—held that the people of England should have the Scriptures in their own tongue, as a means both of the highest spiritual and temporal good. Wickliffe had the honour to be the first man in Europe who questioned the spiritual supremacy of the Pope and the infallibility of the Church of Rome. He denied the real presence in the eucharist, the merit of monastic vows, maintained that the Scriptures were the sole rule of faith, and that the numerous ceremonies of the Church were hateful to true piety. He made a translation of the Scriptures, and upheld his opinions by most powerful and frequent preaching; while his writings also were very voluminous, amounting to a hundred and fifty-six treatises, some in Latin, others in English.

Wickliffe, strangely enough, — the prejudices of his age being considered, — died a natural death at his rectory of Lutterworth ; but after his decease Fleming, Bishop of London, having procured a papal bull from Martin V., exhumed and burnt his bones, throwing the ashes into a brook ; of which transaction Fuller nobly says : “ This brook hath conveyed the ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean ; and thus the ashes of Wickliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over.”

Chaucer deserves to be venerated as a patriot quite as much as a poet, because he may be said to have re-conquered our language for us, when it had long lain under ban and interdict. Geoffrey Chaucer was born in 1328, seven years after the death of Dante, and twenty-four years after the birth of Petrarch. There has been a lengthened controversy as to the place of his birth ; but he himself—surely the best authority—asserts it to have been London. “ The City of London, that is to me so dear and sweet, in which I was forth-grown :—and more kindly love have I to that place than to any other in earth (as every kindly creature hath full appetite to that place of his kindly ingendure).” The rank of his parents has equally been the subject of dispute. Four biographers give different testimonies. Speght asserts his father was a vintner, Hearne that he was a

merchant, Leland that he was of noble stock, and Pitts that his father was a knight. Whether descended from peer or peasant, we may be sure he was *well born* in the best sense—endowed with nature's richest gifts; and it is certain also that his parents, whatever their rank, must have had competent means at their command, for he was liberally educated, and studied at both universities,—first at Cambridge, and after at Oxford. He travelled through many European countries, becoming also a student of the Temple. He was appointed to an office at court, at a time when gentle birth was much valued; and he ultimately, by his marriage, became allied to royalty. Few men in any age could have so great an opportunity of beholding human nature under various aspects. A scholar, a traveller, a courtier,—nature, education, and circumstances seem happily, in his case, to have combined to aid him.

Four of the most illustrious women of the age pre-eminently delighted in the genius of Chaucer: Philippa the Queen; the Lady Margaret, Countess of Pembroke, daughter of the king; and the Lady Blanche, heiress of Lancaster, who was the first wife of John of Gaunt; and, at a later time, Anne of Bohemia, the first wife of the ill-fated Richard the Second. These were the patrons of his intellect. One who influenced his heart and stimulated his genius yet more was

Philippa Picard de Rouet of Hainault, who, after eight or nine years' tender and respectful courtship, became his wife. It was Catherine, the sister of this Philippa, who ultimately became the third wife of John of Gaunt, and thus linked her illustrious poet brother-in-law with the royal family of England.

In such a sphere of courtly splendour, mingling with the great and gay, — all of them foreigners, or of immediate foreign extraction, — and when it was the fashion to look upon the language and people of England as boorish, and incapable of refinement, — it was brave and patriotic of Chaucer to make the rugged national language the vehicle of his graphic and minute descriptions, his playful fancies, his tender and kindly thoughts. Chaucer went on a political mission to Genoa; and while he was in Italy he visited Padua in 1373, and saw Petrarch, and brought from Italy many noble thoughts and pleasant fancies to weave into our literature, — in particular that narrative of the patience of woman, the story of Griselda, which his genius ultimately made so popular, despite the improbability and extravagance of the incidents, and the doubtful morality of the lesson it inculcates. Chaucer takes pains to tell his reader whence he had the pathetic and beautiful narrative of unmerited wrongs and patient endurance. He said it was

“ Learned at Padua of a worthy clerk —  
As proved by his words, and by his work,  
Francis Petrark, the laureate poete.”

This truly great poet had travelled without losing his own nationality: he was a scholar without pedantry, a courtier without servility. He used the powers of his mind and the advantages of education and travel to enrich his native language, and to lay the basis of a national literature. Admirably has it been said, “ Not a quip, not a jest, not a simile, not a new jingle of sounds and syllables, let the intrinsic value of the sentiment of which they are the foliage and efflorescence be ever so small, but in the act of originating that quip, jest, simile, or jingle, Chaucer is struggling successfully with the tough element of an unformed language, and assisting to render it plastic for future speakers and writers.”

It is memorable, as marking the intellectual influence of women over the mind of the father of our poetry, how many of his works were written at their suggestion. The book of “ The Duchess,” “ La Prière de Notre Dame,” “ Chaucer’s Dreame,” “ The Legende of Gode Women,” were thus composed.

Many had been the public calamities and commotions that Chaucer had seen. In his youth the fearful pestilence of “ the black death ;” afterwards, the splendid continental victories of

Edward; — the knightly shows and courtly splendours; — the stirring of a thought like hidden fire among the people, roused by the voice of Wickliffe, who, moved by the spirit of truth, wrote severely against the wolves in sheep's clothing, who in the name of religion practised on the superstitions of the oppressed people, saying of the friars, "they visiten rich men, and by hypocrisy getten falsely their alms, and withdrawen from poor men; but they visiten rich widows for their muck, and maken them to be buried in the Friars, but poor men come not there." Of such he asserts that they "be worse enemies and slayers of men's soul than is the cruel fiend of hell himself; for they, under the habit of holiness, lead men and nourish them in sins, and be special helpers of the fiend to strangle men's souls."

Such words made the principles of the "Lollards," the early protestants, spread rapidly among the people. The sense of wrong, however, is a different thing from a clear perception of right, and hence tumult and insurrection checked the progress of the Lollards. The revolt of Wat Tyler and John Ball shows pretty clearly the discontents, but not the knowledge, prudence, and power, of the people. Then followed the dethronement of Richard and the accession of Henry IV. (the son of Chaucer's patron and brother-in-law, John of Gaunt), a circumstance that laid

the basis of the future wars of the succession between the houses of York and Lancaster.

Our poet father did not escape the discipline of adversity; he became involved in the affairs of John of Gaunt, and in the struggles of the Wickliffites and Lollards, and it was necessary for him to escape to the continent. He took refuge at Hainault, the birthplace of his wife, and remained there till the animosity of his adversaries or their power was modified. Subsequently, on his venturing to return, he met with ingratitude from his own party, and was for a time a prisoner in the Tower. After his release he suffered, according to some of his biographers, "sheer unmistakable poverty." Thus he may be said to have completed the circle of human experience in his own person. High and low, rich and poor, rude and learned, a prison and a palace, his native land and foreign countries, were equally well known to him. Hence the universality of his knowledge, the aptness of his illustrations, the graphic delineation and distinctness of his characters.

His writings are of three kinds: his prose, containing "A Treatise on the Astrolabe," written for his son Lewis, a child of ten years, but so advanced in his studies as to require his father's knowledge on the principles of astronomy as then understood, "The Testament of Love," and a



translation of Boethius, "*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*;" his miscellaneous and minor poems; and his last and greatest work, "The Canterbury Tales," which, as a picture of the manners of the period, and as true to nature in all time, will ever be regarded as one of the very finest poems in our language.

The age in which Chaucer wrote, despite its splendours and courtly magnificence, was exceedingly coarse in expression; and hence our poet, desiring to show how people spoke, rather than how they ought to speak, has given some vile stories as gross men would then utter them; his apology being, that tales of churls must be told in churlish manner,—a defence more artistic than moral. There are many narratives, however, abounding in tenderness and delicacy of sentiment.

The introduction to the "Canterbury Tales" is admirable, not only for its graphic description, its life-like minuteness and poetic power, but as a record of the manners of the age. It is a contribution to our historical knowledge, as well as our poetic literature. The ordinary reader, whose opportunities for study are not frequent, will be deterred, by the obsolete spelling and phraseology, from making intimate acquaintance with Chaucer. In the present day there have been many modernised versions, and while none of them can render fully the quaint grace and

affluent descriptions of the original, many, by their simplicity and faithful adherence to the text, have made Chaucer familiar to the reading public.

We subjoin, slightly abridged, Mr. Cowden Clarke's beautiful prose version of the prologue to the "Canterbury Tales:"\* —

"In that pleasant season of the year, when the April showers and the soft west wind make the grass and flowers to spring up in every mead and heath, and birds welcome the shining days, it is the custom with the people from all parts of the country to set forth on pilgrimages to foreign lands, and more especially to pay their vows at the shrine raised in Canterbury to the holy martyr St. Thomas à Becket.

"At this time of the year, I Geoffrey Chaucer, the writer of these tales, was remaining at the sign of the Tabard in Southwark, ready to set forth on my pilgrimage to Canterbury. In the evening a company of about nine and twenty persons bound on the same errand had assembled in the inn; with all of whom I had made acquaintance before sunset, and had agreed to journey in their company the following day. Before I enter upon my tale, the reader may desire to know what were the character, condition, and exterior accomplishments of my fellow travellers. These as they appeared to me, I supply as follows.

"The first in order was a worthy KNIGHT, a worshipper from his youth of chivalrous and all gallant

\* "Tales from Chaucer, in Prose," by Charles Cowden Clarke.

deeds ; a lover of truth and honour, frankness and courtesy. He had served with renown in his lord's wars against the heathen, the Russian, and the Turk ; had fought in fifteen battles, and in three tilting matches had slain his foe. With all these rough and unchamber-like accomplishments, he was in his demeanour and address as meek as a young maiden. No villanous or injurious speech was ever heard to pass his lips. In short, he was a perfect knight of gentle blood. As regards his furniture and equipment, he rode a good and serviceable horse which had become staid and somewhat the worse for hard campaigning. His dress was a short fustian cassock, or gaberdine, soiled and fretted with his armour, for he had newly arrived from foreign travel, and was proceeding straight to the shrine of our holy martyr at Canterbury.

“ He was accompanied by his son, a youth about twenty years of age, who acted as his SQUIRE. The person of this young man was tall and well-proportioned, of great strength and activity. Being a bachelor and a lover, he was delicately attentive to his external appearance. His hair, which flowed in rich natural curls upon his shoulders, was carefully disposed. Hoping to win his lady's favour, he had behaved with bravery in three several expeditions, in Flanders, in Artois, and in Picardy. His gown, which was short, with long open sleeves, was as fresh and gay as a spring meadow embroidered with flowers. Singing and piping all day long, he was as cheerful as the month of May. In addition to all these graces, he was a fine horseman, a tasteful writer of songs,

excelled in the tournament and the dance, could write and draw with ease and elegance, and what was esteemed a principal accomplishment in a squire of high degree, he was worthy to carve at table before his father. Courteous, humble, and dutiful, was this fair young man; and withal so devoted to his lady-love that he would outwatch the doting nightingale.

“One other attendant, and no more, had our KNIGHT upon the present occasion; a YEOMAN dressed in a green coat and hood. He had a head like a nut\*, and a face of the same colour. In his hand he carried a sturdy bow, and at his side under his belt a sheaf of bright sharp arrows winged with peacock feathers. His arm was defended by a bracer. On one side hung a sword and buckler, and on the other a well-appointed dagger, keen as a spear. At his breast hung a silver ornament, also a horn, the girdle or baldrick of which was green. He was a thorough forester, and skilful in all manner of woodcraft.

“There was also in our company a nun, a Prioress called Madame Eglantine, a demure and simply smiling lady, whose sharpest speech was, ‘By Saint Eloy!’ She could chant by heart the whole of the divine service, sweetly twanging it through her nose. She was mistress of the French language, as it is spoken at the school of Stratford-le-Bow; but the French of Paris was to her unknown. Her conduct at meals was precisely well-bred and delicate, all her

\* There is some doubt whether this means “nut” or “knotte-head,” the knob of a stick, or “neat-head,” the head of a bullock.

anxiety being to display a courteous and stately deportment, and to be regarded in return with esteem and reverence. So charitable and piteous was her nature, that a dead or bleeding mouse in a trap would wring her heart. She kept several little dogs, which were pampered on roast meat, milk, and the finest bread. Bitterly would she take on if one were ill-used or dead; in short, she was all conscience and tender heart.

“To speak of her features, her nose was long but well-shaped, her eyes light and grey as glass, her mouth delicately small, soft, and red, and her forehead fair and broad. For dress she wore a neatly made cloak, and a carefully crimped neckkerchief; on her arm was a pair of beads of small coral, garnished with green, from which depended a handsome gold brooch, with a great A engraved upon it, and underneath the motto ‘*Amor vincit omnia*’ (Love overcomes all things).

“In her train was another nun, who acted as chaplain; also three priests.

“The next in succession was a MONK, one well calculated to rule his order. He was a bold rider and fond of hunting, a manly man, and worthy to have been an abbot. Many a capital horse had he in stall, and as he rode along, one could hear his bridle jingling in the whistling wind like the distant chapel bells.

“Our monk set but little store by the strict regulations of the good old saints, holding rather with modern opinions: for instance, he cared not the value of a straw for that one that denies that a monk can be a hunter and at the same time a holy man; or that out

of his cloister he is like a fish out of water. And indeed, there is some reason in his objection, for as he would say, 'why should he pore all day over his books till his brain is turned, or apply himself to handicraft labour, as St. Augustine ordains? Let St. Augustine stick to his day labour! for himself he was a good hard rider outright, and kept his greyhounds, which were as swift as swallows before rain; coursing was his sole pleasure, and to gratify it he spared no cost. I noticed that his sleeves were embroidered with the finest grey fur, and his hood fastened under his chin with a curiously chased gold clasp, at one end of which was wrought a true lover's knot. His head was bald and shone like glass; his face, too, seemed as though it had been anointed; his eyes were deeply set, and kept rolling in his head, which glowed and steamed like a furnace. He had anything but the air of a mortified and *ghostly* father; indeed, a roast swan was his favourite dish. A fine and stately horse as brown as a berry, and boots supple and without a wrinkle, completed the equipment of this choice specimen of a prelate.

"There was a FRIAR, a curator (one licensed to beg alms within a certain district), who, though in appearance a solemn man, was a wanton and merry wag. \* \* \* \* He was a favourite of all the country round, and especially cherished by the good dames of the town; for being a licentiate (licensed by the pope to hear confessions), he was by his own account as great in hearing confession as a curate. Sweetly would he dispense the duties of shrift, and pleasant was his absolution. Whenever he expected a handsome

pittance, the penance he enjoined was always light ; for it is a sign a man has been well shriven when he makes presents to a poor convent.

“ His tippet was constantly stored with articles of cutlery and knickknacks, which he distributed among the good wives in his perambulations. To these pleasant qualities, which made him every where a welcome guest, he added the grace of being a performer on the lute and a merry singer. In figure he was as well made and strong as a champion of wrestlers, and the skin of his neck was as white as the lady lily. He was better acquainted with all the taverns, tapsters, and hostlers in the town, than with the strolling beggars, the sick, and the miserable : for a man of his worth and calling, it was more convenient as well as befitting that he should cultivate the acquaintance of the rich, and dispensers of good things, than with the diseased and the mendicant. Wherever he espied a chance of profit or advantage, there did he direct all his courtesies, and humbly ply his services. He was the expertest beggar in the convent, and obtained a grant that none of the brethren should cross him in his haunts ; for if a widow had barely a shoe to her foot, so sweet to her ear was his ‘as it was in the beginning,’ &c., that he would extort a farthing from her before his departure. Of him it might be said that ‘the labourer was of *more* worth than his hire.’ On settling days he was a man of importance, not like the cloisterer, or poor scholar, with his threadbare cloak, but rather as master of the order, or even like the pope himself.

“ He wore a short cloak of double-woven worsted,

round as a lady's dress, uncrushed. He would lisp in his speech from wantonness or to give effect to his English; and while he was singing, his eyes would twinkle like the stars in a frosty night. The name of this worthy limiter was Hubert.

“ There was a **MERCHANT** with a forked beard, and dressed in a motley suit, with a Flemish beaver hat. His boots were of the best manufacture, neatly clasped. He sat high upon his horse, and delivered his opinions in a solemn tone, always sounding forth the increase of winnings. He was for having the sea securely guarded, for the benefit of trade, between Middleburgh and Orwell. His skill and knowledge in the various exchanges of money were remarkable; and so prudently did he order his bargains and speculations, that he was esteemed a man of credit and substance.

“ There was a **CLERK**, or scholar of Oxford, also, who was deeply skilled in logic. His horse was as lean as a rake, and he himself was not overfed, but looked hollow and staidly sober. His surtout was of the threadbare class; for he had hitherto obtained no living, and not being a man of the world he was unfit for an office. He had rather have at his bed's head twenty books of Aristotle and his philosophy, than the costliest wardrobe and furniture. Though a philosopher, however, he had not yet discovered the golden secret of science, but all that he could scrape from his friends was forthwith spent in books of learning. Fervently would he pray for the souls of those who would assist him to purchase instruction, for study was the sole care of his life. In conversa-



tion he never uttered a word more than was necessary, and that was said with a modest propriety, shortly and quickly, and full of meaning. His discourse was pregnant with morality, and he as gladly gave as received instruction.

“A SERGEANT-AT-LAW, cautious and shrewd, who had been often at consultation, was there also. A prudent and deferential man, he had been frequently appointed justice of assize by patent and commission. Many were the fees and robes with which he had been presented on account of his great legal knowledge and renown. There was no purchaser like him, and his dealings were above suspicion. He was the busiest of men, and yet he seemed more busy than he was. He had at his fingers' ends, all the terms, cases, and judgments from the time of the Conquest, and in his indictments, the man was clever that could detect a flaw : he knew all the statutes by heart. He rode in a plain coat of mixed cloth, fastened with a narrow striped silken girdle.

“A country gentleman, commonly called a FRANKLIN, was in our company. He had a fresh-coloured rosy face, and a beard as white as a daisy. A sop in wine was his favourite morning beverage ; for he was a true son of Epicurus, believing that the most perfect happiness consisted in perfect enjoyments. He possessed a noble mansion, and was the most hospitable of entertainers. He dined at quality hours—always after one o'clock, and so plenteously stored was his table that his house may be said to have snowed meat and drink, fish, flesh, and fowl, and of these the daintiest. His suppers were furnished according to the season.

Many a fat partridge had he in his preserve ; and stewed bream or pike was a common dish at his board. Ill befell his cook if the sauce were too pungent or the dinner not punctually served. He kept open house, and the dining table in hall remained covered the whole day.

“ He had been at several times justice of the peace, sheriff, steward of the hundred court, and knight of the shire. Among all the country gentlemen round there was not his compeer. At his girdle, which was as white as morning milk, hung a dagger and a silken purse.

“ A HABERDASHER, and a CARPENTER, a WEAVER, a DYER, and a worker of TAPESTRY, members of a solemn and large fraternity, were all clothed in the same costume. Their furniture was all spick and span new. Their knives were not of the common description, mounted with brass, but wrought with pure silver ; their girdles and pouches also were equally costly. Each seemed to be of the respectable class of burgesses, who take the uppermost seats in the Guildhall. Their grave and sensible demeanour befitted them for the office of aldermen. They were men of landed estate, and wealthy in cattle ; and this their wives had no objection to, for it is a fine thing to be styled ‘ Madam,’ and to walk with your train supported like a queen in the first ranks to church.

“ The company had a COOK with them upon this occasion. He was the man of all others to tell you a draught of London ale out of a hundred. No one could match him in roasting and boiling ; his made

dishes, potted beef, raised pies, and blanc-mangers, were absolutely eminent.

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“ A good wife of Bath made one of our company. She was unfortunately rather deaf, and had lost some of her teeth. She carried on a trade in cloth-making, which excelled the manufactures of Ypres and Ghent. No wife in all the parish could take precedence of her at mass ; and if one ever so presumed, she was wrath out of all charity. The kerchiefs which adorned her head on Sundays were of the finest web, and I dare swear weighed a pound. Her hose were of a brilliant scarlet, gartered up without a wrinkle ; and her shoes tight and new. She had been ever esteemed a worthy woman, and had accompanied to church five husbands in her time. Having thrice travelled to Jerusalem, crossing many a strange river, and having visited Rome, Saint James’s, Cologne with its three Kings, and passed through Galicia, she had a world of intelligence to communicate by the way. Her dress consisted of a spruce neckerchief, a hat as broad as a target, a mantle wrapping her fair hips, and on her feet were a pair of sharp spurs. She rode upon an ambling pony. In company she took her share in the laugh, and would display her remedies for all complaints in love : she could play a good hand at that game.

“ There was also a religious man, who was a poor VILLAGE PARSON : yet was he rich in holy thoughts and works as well as in learning ; a faithful preacher of the Gospel of Christ ; full of gentleness and diligence, patient in adversity and forbearing. So far was he

from distressing for his tythes, that he disbursed his offerings and almost his whole substance among his parishioners: a pittance sufficed him. The houses in his parish were situate far asunder, yet neither wind and rain, nor storm and tempest, could keep him from his duty; but, with staff in hand, would he visit the remotest, great and small, rich and poor. This noble example he kept before his flock, that first he himself performed what he afterwards preached, joining this figure with his admonition, 'If gold will rust, what will not iron do?' For, if a priest in whom we confide become tarnished, a wonder if the frail layman keep himself unpolluted. The priest should set an example of purity to his flock; for how shameful a sight is a foul shepherd and cleanly sheep. He did not let out his benefice to hire, or desert his flock to run up to London for the purpose of seeking promotion; but steadily kept house and guarded well the fold. He was the true shepherd, and no hireling. Moreover, holy and virtuous as he was, he turned an eye of pity upon the sinful man, mingling his lectures with discretion and benignity. It was the business of his life by good example to lead his fellow creatures gently to Heaven. The obstinate and stiff-necked, however, whether in high or low estate, were sure to receive from him a severe rebuke. A better priest I know not far or near; he craved neither pomp nor reverence, or betrayed any affected scrupulousness of conscience, but the doctrine of Christ and his apostles he taught with simplicity, first following it himself. He had a brother with him, a PLOUGHMAN, who had in his time scattered many a load of dung, a thorough

hard labourer, living in peace and perfect charity with all men : above all things and at all times he best loved his God and Creator, and then his neighbour as himself. When it lay in his power he would finish a job of thrashing for a poor man without hire. He paid his tythes fairly and punctually, both of his produce and live stock. He was dressed in a tabard, and rode upon a mare.

“ There were also a REEVE, and a MILLER, a SUMMONER, a PARDONER, a MANCIPLE, and myself.

“ The MILLER was a hardy churl, brawny, and large of bone ; he always bore away the prize ram in wrestling matches ; he was short-shouldered, broad, and stubby.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ There was a gentle MANCIPLE (an officer who purchased food for inns of court), who was a pattern to all caterers and purchasers of provision ; for whether he paid in ready money or went upon credit, he always so managed his accounts to have a surplus of cash in hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ The REEVE (a bailiff or land steward) was a slender choleric man ; his beard was close-shaven, like stubble, and hair cropped round his ears with a forelock like a priest. \* \* \* He was alive to all the tricks and contrivances of labourers and other bailiffs, so that they stood in awe of him as they would of death himself. He had a handsome house upon a heath, ‘ bosomed high in green trees,’ and in short was better provided than his master, for he had secretly amassed considerable property, which he

would upon occasion artfully lend to his lord in his necessities, and thus confer an easy obligation out of his own superfluity.

“ There was a SUMMONER (of culprits to ecclesiastical courts) with us, whose face was like one of the fiery cherubim ; for it was studded with red-hot carbuncles. He had small puckered eyes, scurfy brows, and a black scanty beard. The children were frightened at the sight of him. His favourite food and beverage were garlic, leeks, and onions, and the strongest bodied red wine. Then would he shout and rave like a madman, speaking nothing but Latin : he had caught up a few terms out of some law decree, and no wonder, for he heard nothing else all day, and every one knows that a jay can speak what he has been taught as well as the pope himself ; but, let any one try him a little further, he would find his philosophy quite spent—*Questio quid juris ?* would then be the answer. He was, however, a kind fellow in his way, and would for a quart of wine or so, wink at his neighbour’s delinquences ; but if he found one with a good warm purse, he would tell him he need not care for the archdeacon’s malediction ; just as if a man’s soul were in his purse, for in purse he should be punished. The purse, would he say, is the archdeacon’s hell ; in all which I pronounce him to be an arch deceiver, since the guilty man should ever stand in awe of a curse.

“ A gentle PARDONER rode also with this wight, his friend and compeer. He was originally from Roncevaux, and had now newly arrived from the court of Rome. The burden of the song, ‘ Come hither, love, to me,’ was constantly running in his head, which he

shouted at full stretch of his lungs, the summoner all the while accompanying him with his stiff bass, as if it had been a double clarion. This pardoner had smooth yellow hair, which hung by ounces about him, like a strike of flax overspreading his shoulders. In the gaiety of his heart he wore no hood, but kept it packed up in his wallet, so he rode with his head bare, save and except a cap, in which was fastened a vernicle (a picture of Jesus Christ in miniature). He prided himself upon his sitting on horseback, as being after the newest fashion. Before him lay his wallet stuffed with pardons all hot from Rome. He had a full glaring eye like a hare's, a sneaking voice like a goat's, and a chin which never owned the inheritance of a beard.

“And now to speak of his profession. If you were to search from Ware to Berwick-upon-Tweed, you would not meet with such another pardoner. Among his relics he could produce a pillow covering, which he would pronounce to be the Virgin Mary's veil; a small piece of the seal which St. Peter had with him when he walked upon the sea; a brazen cross set with brilliants; and some pig's bones in a glass. With these relics he would make in one day more money among the poor country people, than the parson would in two months. Thus with his flattery and his falsities he made fools of both priest and people.

“Notwithstanding all this, however, I must acknowledge that he was a famous churchman: he read the service with dignity and emphasis, though he shone to greater advantage at the *Offertory*; for he knew that the sermon would then succeed, in which it be-

hoved him to polish up his tongue, for the purpose of procuring a handsome collection afterwards, wherein he was successful. Therefore, in the anticipation of it, he would sing like a blackbird after rain.

“ Thus have I related to you the list, the calling, the array, and the purport, of that assembly’s being collected at the above-mentioned inn in Southwark, called the ‘Tabard.’ ”

The picture of the Host of that inn, and his plan of the amusements of the journey, is a worthy sequel to this graphic description of the people of the olden time.

“ Our host set before us, at supper, an excellent entertainment ; the food and the wine were of the best quality. He was a comely man, large in person, with sunken eyes, and worthy to have been created marshal in a hall : the whole ward of Cheap cannot boast a fairer citizen,—bold and manly, plain and sensible in his speech, at the same time merry withal. He thus addressed the company, after we had all paid our reckoning : ‘ Now, my masters, permit me to welcome you heartily to our inn ; for, by my troth, I have not this year seen so honourable a company as is now seen beneath this roof : fain would I contribute to your amusement were it in my power. In proof of this, a thought has just struck me, which will cost you nothing. You are all about to journey to Canterbury ; God and the blessed Martyr reward you. Well, as you travel along, you will be for whiling the way with gossip and glee ; for, truly, there is little comfort in journeying as dull as a stone. If, therefore’



you will abide by my judgment, and proceed to-morrow as I shall direct, whip off my head, if I don't make you a merry company! Without more ado, hold up your hand, if you agree to my proposal?'

"Our consent was not long to seek, seeing that there was no occasion for much deliberation. We, therefore, granted him his terms, and bade him speak on.

"'To come to the point, then, my masters, each of you on the way to and from Canterbury shall relate two adventures, and whoso shall acquit himself the best, that is, in tales of most mirth and judgment, shall have a supper here at the general expense upon your return from Canterbury; and to contribute to your entertainment, I will myself ride with you at my own cost, and be your guide. Furthermore, let me make a condition, that whosoever shall call my judgment in question he shall bear the whole cost of the journey. If you grant me my condition, say so at once, and I will early prepare for my undertaking.'

"We cheerfully bound ourselves to abide by his terms, at the same time engaging him to be our governor, to sit in judgment upon the merit of our stories, also to provide a supper at a stated price per head, and that we would, both high and low, be ruled by his decision. All this, and the wine at the same time, having been discussed, without longer delay we all went to roost."

There is not, in the same compass, any description that so fully places the people of the olden time before the minds of modern readers. Any one

reading this succession of pictures, must feel that they have the individuality of portraits. Well has it been said, "His poetry reads like history. Every thing has a downright reality; at least in the narrator's mind. A simile, or a sentiment, is as if *it were given in upon evidence.*"\*

Fox, the Martyrologist, has said, that "Chaucer was a right Wickliffian, or else there never was any." And though that has been deemed an exaggerated estimate of the protestantism of Chaucer, yet no one can read his description of the worldly pleasure-taking "Monk," loving his horse, and dogs, and good living; the subtle "Friar," seeking the money rather than the souls of the people; the "Summoner," with his fiery visage, doubtless a character well known as often summoning the hapless Lollards to cruel tribunals; the "Pardoner," with his wallet of indulgences for those who could pay for them, and his rubbish of relics to work on the superstition of the devout, — without feeling assured such true pictures must have had their influence for good on the awakening mind of the people; while the portrait of a "poor parson," the faithful minister of Christ, has all the beauty of apostolic simplicity in itself, and all the force of contrast to rouse the attention of the reader.

Those have a poor and false idea of poetry who

\* Hazlett's "Lectures on Poetry."

hold that is only intended to please the ear, and minister to the imagination. Its true work is to guide the spirit of the age, and lead it forward in the march of sound opinion and steady progress. Chaucer did this, not perhaps with so direct a purpose, but with nearly as great ultimate success, as Wickliffe himself.

Contemporary with Chaucer was Gower, celebrated as "the moral Gower;" a more ostensible moral design, but far less force, universality, and genius being manifest in his writings. Gower and Chaucer became acquainted at Oxford in their early days. The contemporary voice was loudest in praise of Gower, though posterity has long since reversed that judgment. A terrible stigma of ingratitude attaches to Gower. He forgot the benefits the hapless Richard II. heaped on him, and was among the first to congratulate the successful usurper Henry IV., and to pour contempt on his fallen patron and monarch. Chaucer, though a family connexion of the new monarch, practised no such meanness; and he must have shrunk, with deep sorrow, from the treachery of his friend and brother poet.

Gower wrote several minor and three longer poems, or rather a long poem in three distinct parts. The latter were composed in three different languages — Latin, French, and English. The first, "*Speculum Meditantis*," is a moral poem,

recommending, from various historical examples, conjugal purity and affection. The second, "*Vox Clamantis*," is a poetical chronicle of the insurrection of the commons in the reign of Richard II. "*Confessio Amantis*" is written in English at the desire of Richard II., and is a poetical system of morality, illustrated by amusing tales. This last is the only one of the three poems that has been printed. Gower certainly was in no sense such a national benefactor as Chaucer. The latter chose our English language only, as the vehicle of his thoughts, though doubtless he often wove foreign, particularly French, words into his poems. When the poet Spenser speaks of Chaucer,

"As a well of English undefiled,"

he must refer, not merely to the actual words the poet used, but to his practice of composing in the vernacular tongue, which he amplified and enriched by grafting many foreign words upon it, that helped him to render his meaning more fully.

Chaucer died in 1400, having outlived Wickliffe fifteen years. Gower, who was the senior of both by a few years, died in 1402. Apart from the intrinsic value of their writings, and the mission of their lives, these three men had demonstrated the power of the English language, and increased its capabilities. No writer from their

time could term the language barbarous, or inadequate to the purposes of the divine, the orator, and the poet.

Thus a firm basis was laid by them on which to erect the superstructure of a National Literature.

## CHAP. II.

## THE ART OF PRINTING, ITS PROFESSORS AND PATRONS.

A LONG period of gross darkness succeeded the time of Wickliffe and Chaucer. Public events will in some measure account for the check that mental activity received. Both Henry IV. and his son, the fifth of the name, adopted the plan of diverting the attention of the people from political grievances and theological investigations, by leading them to war with France. And when, at length, these foreign contests ended, there ensued the terrible civil broils — the Wars of the Roses — that lasted thirty years, were signalized by twelve pitched battles, cost the lives it is said of eighty princes of the blood, almost annihilated the ancient nobility of England, and, what was much worse, devastated the land, checked the efforts of industry, impoverished and brutalized the people, and obviously prevented the spread of learning and the advance of civilization.

The two great events of the fifteenth century were the introduction of the art of printing, and the discovery of America. It will be interesting to note some of the subordinate matters connected

with literature, prior to the introduction of that art which was to enfranchise the human mind.

It is a little humbling to the pride of human genius to note how the perpetuating and multiplying of a thought depended on small matters. The causes that principally operated to keep the human mind in darkness for ages, were the scarcity of materials for writing, and the consequent dearth of manuscripts.

Stone slabs, metal plates, wooden blocks, the bark of trees, leaves of a tough fibre, and papyrus, manufactured from a species of rush, which the ancients procured exclusively on the banks of the Nile, were the first materials used before prepared skins, as parchment and vellum, were introduced. An iron graver was the pen used for stone or metal surfaces. A coating of wax was spread over the wooden blocks for occasional rather than permanent writing; which had the convenience of being easily obliterated by heat, and presented a smooth surface. A bone or ivory style was the implement used for writing on this. Egyptian reeds were used for writing on bark, papyrus, and parchment. The use of quill pens, though known in the seventh century, did not become general till six hundred years later.

The tablets, or thin slices of wood, when fastened together, formed a book, *Codex*, so called from resembling the trunk of a tree split into

planks — hence our word *code*. The leaves used for writing give us our word *Folio*, from the Latin *folium*, a leaf. When the inner bark was preferred, that of the lime tree especially, it was called *liber* — hence *Liber*, the Latin name for a book, and the root of many words referring to books. When these bark books were rolled into a portable form they were called *volumen* — hence our word *volume*. And the primitive meaning of the Anglo-Saxon word *boc*, is the beech tree — from which our word book.

Paper from rags — first cotton and then linen — was made, according to Dr. Robertson's account, in the eleventh century. The learned historian of the middle ages, Hallam, entirely discredits the assertion that paper was in use so early. He dates its introduction, if not invention, as late as the thirteenth, or early in the fourteenth century.\* This useful material must have supplied a most important means of improvement. Parchment and vellum had always been dear, and owing to the monopolies in the manufacture they were scarce; and, therefore, in themselves, were likely to become sources of temptation to persons who cared not for what was written thereon, indeed, could not understand it, but who could always find a market for the material, whether written on or blank. The loss of several of the valuable manu-

\* See Hallam's "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," vol. i. pp. 55—57.



scripts of antiquity is to be accounted for most probably in this way. So that the invention of paper could not fail to be a great boon to society.

The art of transcribing was carried on principally by the monks. Every great abbey, and most convents, had a *scriptorium*, or writing room; and the immense sums paid for manuscripts induced poorer orders of monks and nuns diligently to cultivate the art of transcribing. As writing materials became more accessible, the number of copyists increased. Some of that trade, or profession, were to be found in every great town, especially in such as had universities. At the time when printing was introduced into Paris, more than 6000 persons subsisted by copying and illuminating manuscripts.

The earliest books were rolled on a cylinder, and called, as we said, *volumen*; and then a ball of wood or ivory was fastened on the outside for security and ornament, and completed the binding, if so we may call it. Julius Cæsar, introduced the custom of folding his letters in the square form, like our books. In the middle ages the monks were the bookbinders. And there were also traders called *ligatores*, whose business it was to sell covers, which were chiefly made of sheep and deer skin. Books were often sold in the porches of the churches; but the slow process of multiplying books by transcribing them with the

hand, would naturally prevent any such traffic in them as would make it a distinct business to sell them. Booksellers, however, appeared at the latter part of the twelfth century. The lawyers and the universities originated this trade.

Some curious records of the price of books before the introduction of printing have come down to us. Stow, in his "Survey of London," says that in 1433, 66*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* was paid for transcribing a copy of the works of Nicholas Lyra, in two volumes, to be chained in the library of the Grey Friars. We may estimate how large a sum that was when we find that the usual price of wheat then was 5*s.* 4*d.* the quarter; the wages of a ploughman 1*d.* a day; of a mechanic, as a sawyer or stone-cutter, 4*d.* In 1429 the price of one of Wickliffe's English New Testaments was four marks and forty pence, or 2*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.* The price of a cow at this time was 8*s.*, and of a good horse about 20*s.*

Warton, in his "History of English Poetry," says, "when a book was bought, the affair was of so much importance that it was customary to assemble persons of consequence and character, and to make a formal record that they were present on the occasion." Bonds were given, and extensive deposits of plate or money, when manuscripts were borrowed. When they were bequeathed as legacies, it was often in fee, and for

the term of a life, and afterwards to the library of some religious house.

When all these facts are considered, it is not surprising that many monasteries had only one missal, or one psalter, and that in 1400 the library at Rome had little else than missals and legends.

The common people, who could have no access to books, were necessarily dependent on oral teaching, and Wickliffe's preaching, rather than his writings, spread his opinions among the populace.

William Caxton, the first English printer, was a Kentish man, born about 1412. His parents were worthy people; and it is memorable that, at a time when from political troubles and the unsettled state of the country, education was neglected, the parents of Caxton reared their son carefully. "I am bounden," says he, "to pray for my father's and mother's souls, that, in my youth, sent me to school, by which by the sufferance of God I get my living, I hope, truly." He was apprenticed to a citizen of London, — *a mercer*, — that name being then given to designate a general merchant trading in various goods. That Caxton was a diligent and faithful apprentice may be inferred from the fact, that his master, William Large, in 1441 left him, in his will, a legacy of 13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, a handsome sum in those days. After he received this legacy he went abroad, being pro-

bably engaged in mercantile pursuits. He continued, for the most part, in the countries of Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zealand, all at this time under the dominion of the Duke of Burgundy, one of the most powerful princes of Europe. While Caxton's countrymen were contesting in the battle-field the claim of the rival Houses of York and Lancaster, he was exercising his acute and observant mind, acquiring the French and Dutch languages, and preparing himself, by a peaceful and thoughtful life, for his great work as a benefactor to his country. In 1464 he was sent on a mission by Edward IV. to continue and confirm some important treaties of commerce with the Duke of Burgundy. The Low Countries were at that time the great mart of Europe, and Caxton, bred to commerce, from his experience, would be able to enter into treaties beneficial to his own long-troubled land.

In 1450 Guthenberg, generally considered to be the first printer, entered into partnership with Fust, a rich merchant of Mentz, who supplied the sums necessary to carry the invention into effect.

Charles, the son and successor to the Duke of Burgundy, whom Caxton had first known, married Margaret, sister to our Edward IV., and Caxton, who could scarcely have been a merchant on his own account, was appointed to some post in the

household of the Duchess. The exact nature and salary of his office is not known; but he was on terms of familiar intercourse with Margaret, who seems to have rightly appreciated her estimable countryman. Caxton had been deeply interested in the new and wondrous art of printing, and he had exercised himself in making some translations from books that pleased him.

“In 1469,” he says, “having no great charge or occupation, and wishing to eschew sloth and idleness, which is the mother and nourisher of vices, having good leisure, being at Cologne, I set about finishing the translation (of the ‘Histories of Troy’). When, however, I remembered my simpleness and imperfections in French and English, I fell in despair of my works, and after I had written five or six quairs, purposed no more to have continued therein, and the quairs (books) laid apart; and in two years after laboured no more in this work; till in a time it fortunèd the Lady Margaret sent for me to speak with her good Grace of divers matters, among the which I let her have knowledge of the foresaid beginning.” “The Dutchess,” he adds, “found fault with myne English, which she commanded me to amend, and to continue and make an end of the residue; which command I durst not disobey.” The Duchess both encouraged and rewarded him liberally. He mentions in the prologue and epilogue to this

book, that his eyes are dim with overmuch looking on the white paper ; and that age was creeping on him daily, and enfeebling all his body ; *that he " had learned and practised at great charge and dispense to ordain this said book in print, and not written with pen and ink, as other books be."*

This, it seems, was not the first book he had printed at Cologne.

He returned to England about 1472, when he would be sixty years old, after having lived thirty years on the continent. He brought with him some unsold copies of the works he had printed at Cologne. Thomas Milling, Bishop of Hereford, and Abbot of Westminster, was Caxton's first patron. It was probably by his permission that Caxton set up his printing press in the almonry or one of the chapels attached to the Abbey.

There is something inexpressibly interesting in the fact that this great and good man entered on his new and difficult enterprise at a time of life when most men are seeking rest and quietude. Patronage was to be obtained, prejudice to be overcome, expence to be incurred, labour to be performed. What but a deep sense of the importance of his art to the welfare of his countrymen could have sustained him? It has been argued that the inferior character of most of the works he printed is an evidence of a very humble intellect in Caxton, as well as a degenerate taste in the age. The

humility and frankness with which he speaks of his own defects are evidences of greatness; and that his press sent forth books likely to be immediately read was a proof of practical good sense. The great matter was to make his art known to the many rather than the few. The learned were perhaps among the prejudiced. The noble and time-honoured craft of the scribe was in danger, and their cry in other lands might well operate to make Caxton proceed with caution.

The dates are not affixed to Caxton's earliest works. "The Game of Chess," and the "Romance of Jason," are considered to be the first specimens of his art. An eminent patron of Caxton's was Anthony Woodville, Lord Rivers, the brother of the Queen Elizabeth (wife of Edward IV.). He was a learned nobleman — a distinction somewhat rare then, and perhaps deserved only by the nobleman in question, and his illustrious and unfortunate contemporary the Earl of Worcester. Caxton had been intimate with the last-named nobleman on the continent. This Earl of Worcester was a great manuscript collector, and resided many years in Italy for the purpose of study. Pope Pius II. said of him, "Behold the only prince of our time that for virtue and eloquence may be justly compared to the most excellent emperors of Greece and Rome." Such a compliment from an Italian to an Englishman in

that day must have been extorted by the force of truth.

This nobleman perished on the block during the commotions of Edward's reign about two years before Caxton set up his printing press. He left many translations from the classics. Caxton printed two of his translations of Cicero; and when he performed this labour of love for the deceased nobleman, exclaims, "Oh good blessed Lord God! what great losse was it of that noble, virtuous, and well-disposed lord, the Earl of Worcester." "The axe then did at one blow cut off more learning than was in the heads of all the surviving nobility."

Lord Rivers was more fortunate in seeing his works printed. (The first English author, if we except Caxton himself, who had that pleasure.) He translated "The wise Sayings or Dictes of the Philosophers" from the French, and "The wise and wholesome Proverbs of Christina of Pisa," and some other works. His near relationship to the Queen provoked the jealousy of the nobles, and he also, during the reverses of the Yorkists, perished on the block, in the prime of his life, about ten years after the art he had encouraged, and some say aided to introduce, was brought into England.

Subsequently one of Caxton's most influential patrons was Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII. It was natural that a lady who



founded two colleges at Cambridge and one at Oxford, and established numerous grammar schools, and itinerent preachers throughout the land, should favour an art that promised to aid education in a manner previously undreamed of; therefore, we are not surprised that the Lady Margaret used her influence with the king, her son, to induce him to patronise the printer, who was working away with all diligence in the Abbey.

Wonderfully did that old man work! He had not only to print, but to select manuscripts, and make translations, and, as we should call it, edit the works he printed. The productions of his press are sixty-four. Many of them were romances, as "The Liff of King Arthur," "The History of Charlemagne," &c. Some were on chivalry and manners: "The Fait of Armes and Chivalry" he translated and printed at the command of Henry VII. Some were descriptive and historical, as his "Book for Travellers," his "Chronicle and Description of Britain;" some translations, or prose versions of the classics, "Virgil" and "Cicero:" "Reynard the Fox" from the Dutch, and Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales;" which latter he twice printed\*, and gave some admirable prefatory criti-

\* The reason of Caxton twice printing the "Canterbury Tales" is very honourable to him. Warton says, "He probably took the first manuscript he could procure to print

cisms on the great poet, saying, "And so, in all his works, he excelleth, in mine opinion, all other writers in our English; for he writeth no void words, but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence, to whom ought to be given laud and praise for his noble making and writing." It is computed that Caxton translated not fewer than 5000 closely printed folio pages, and, according to Wynkyn de Worde, his ally and successor's testimony, continued his labours "to the last day of his life," in 1490-1. Never was there a seventeen or eighteen years of more continuous labour than this aged man performed. What an example was his life, in that age when, according to Hallam, the little intellectual power possessed was devoted to a study of "Heraldry, that speaks to the eye of pride; and the science of those who despise every other was cultivated with ingenious pedantry." When men exhausted their skill in devising instruments of torture, and gratified the basest passions by tumult and cruelty; when murder stalked around the throne, oppression crushed the people, and ignorance was the

from, and it happened unluckily to be one of the worst in all respects that he could have met with." As soon as Caxton found out the imperfections and errors he began a second edition, conscientiously stating he did so "for to satisfy (or do justice to) the author, whereas tofore (previously) I had erred in hurting and defamyng his boke."

general doom, this man lived, manfully, a noble intelligent life. His clear faculties, kept bright by use, were undimmed to the last. He is a wonderful instance of what may be effected by continuing to cultivate the mind and employ it. He learned his art with much labour in middle age, and began to practise it when well stricken in years; yet youth could not have been more zealous, or early maturity more indefatigable.

It is significant of the times when Caxton wrote, that no works of religion or politics came from his press. Books printed in England before the end of the century amounted to 141, of which 130 were printed in London and Westminster, 7 at Oxford, and 4 at St. Alban's.

Caxton had many foreigners in his employment; and there were others, his rivals, who set up printing presses during his lifetime, in London, Oxford, and St. Alban's. The most celebrated man after Caxton was his before-named assistant, Wynkyn de Worde, who succeeded him in his printing office, and continued in that old office in Westminster Abbey until about 1502; when he removed to the sign of "The Sun," in the parish of St. Bride, where he died in 1534. Being a man of great taste, as well as learning, he introduced many improvements in type and workmanship: neatness, accuracy, and elegance are the characteristics of the books he printed, amounting, at

least, to 408 in number. Many educational works were printed at his press, as vocabularies, accidences—some with the titles “Milk for Children,” “Orchards of Words,” “Promptuaries” for little children, “Lucidaries.” What a boon would these books be to the children of that time, and to their teachers! To borrow, with much difficulty, a manuscript grammar, and to transcribe it, was the only method previously adopted by either the teachers or the taught. And even in the universities, the time and opportunity for reading was limited by many restrictions: 1446, by the statutes of St. Mary’s College, Oxford, it was enacted, that “No scholar shall occupy a book in the library above one hour, or two hours at most, lest others should be hindered from the use of the same.”

It is not surprising that a very great zeal for learning should spring up at this time. The difficulties that had previously obstructed every step in the path of knowledge were being removed, and a spirit of energy and emulation arose that brought about wonderful changes in the course of the century that now commenced.

Richard Pynson, a Norman by birth, and also an assistant of Caxton, introduced the Roman letter into this country. His books are not thought such admirable specimens of typography as De Worde’s, but they fully equalled his in

usefulness. The first treatise of arithmetic ever published in this country was printed by Pynson; it was written by Cuthbert Tonstall, Bishop of London.

Thomas Hunt, an Englishman, was one of the first known printers at Oxford, and John Sibert, a native of Lyons, it is said, at Cambridge. Besides these universities, St. Alban's, York, and Tavistock, were the first towns in the provinces where printing presses were set up.

From this time thoughts were perpetuated, and knowledge became free; and persecution and injustice received a powerful check. To what purpose was it to kill the body of some gifted thinker, when his opinions could be multiplied and dispersed every where? It was not kings and councils, but the printing press, that made the people ripe for, and brought about, the Reformation. Well might Wynkyn de Worde have "The Sun" as the sign of his printing office:—all nature could not furnish a symbol more appropriate of that art, which was to disperse the darkness and mists of ignorance, and spread a genial flood of light over the world.

## CHAP. III.

## FEMALE EDUCATION AND INFLUENCE AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF PRINTING.— SKETCH OF EARLY FEMALE WRITERS.

IT has been matter of surprise to thoughtful readers, that the English language which, at the time of the introduction of printing, was so rude, should, in little more than a hundred years after that event, have attained to such an elegance and power that many of the writings in prose and poetry of the time of Elizabeth and James are models of composition rarely equalled, and never surpassed, even to this day.

The first effect of the art of printing was to advance education : schools became more general, books of instruction more attainable ; added to which there was the impetus of novelty, stimulating curiosity and energy. Women of high rank in England had never been indifferent to the progress of literature ; but in this sixteenth century they not only admired learning and knowledge in others,—they were induced, by the new facilities afforded, to cultivate them for themselves. Hence, among the collateral aids to the

wonderful advancement of mind at that period, the educational attainments of some influential women must be admitted.

The patronage of scholastic institutions by women during the middle ages must ever remain a satisfactory proof of their zeal to promote the intellectual advancement of the nation. Queens, indeed, might found colleges, as much because of the responsibilities of a high station, as from a real love of learning; but there have been many female patrons of education of humbler rank than princesses.

The history of the two universities is a testimony to the ardour for the advancement of learning that dwelt in many female minds. At Oxford: Merton College, whose chief benefactress was Ella Longespee, Countess of Warwick; Baliol College, completed by the piety of Lady Der- vorguilla, and most liberally endowed by her; Trinity\* and Wadham† Colleges, both completed by widows, who nobly carried out their deceased husbands' intentions, and with even enlarged liberality. The female name is fully as conspicuous at Cambridge: Emanuel College, Clare Hall, Pembroke Hall, Queen's College, Christ's College, St. John's College, Sydney Sussex College, are the noble and enduring monuments that attest the munificence of women in promoting education.

\* Lady Paulet.

† Lady Wadman.

Among the illustrious women who adorned the age immediately following the introduction of printing are the daughters of Sir Thomas More, particularly his favourite child and counsellor Mrs. Margaret Roper, whom the learned Erasmus called "The Glory of Britain," for her attainments doubtless, as, at the time the scholar uttered the eulogium, her filial piety had not been so tested by the misfortunes of her father. There was also Queen Katherine Parr, a patroness of the Reformation; and, later, that admirable and innocent victim of the cruel ambition of her kindred, Lady Jane Grey, who was the theme of praise of all competent to judge of her marvellous acquirements. The four daughters of Sir Anthony Cook were also distinguished for learning. One of these, Mildred, became Lady Burleigh, the wife of Elizabeth's prime minister; another, Lady Bacon, the mother and instructress of England's great experimental philosopher. The royal pupil of the learned Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth, both by precept and example, encouraged a taste for literary pursuits; and it is fair to conclude that one reason why the men of that time became so distinguished, was because they had help-meet in the intelligence of the women of the period.

Woman was not, however, so successful in contributing to, as in the patronage of, literature



in our land. The first written work by an English woman dates as far back as the eighth century\*, and is said to be a biographical memoir of the lives of St. Willibald and St. Wunebald, two devout men, who went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The writer was a resident in a convent at Heidenheim, and is supposed to have been sent there as a missionary,—a way in which women were often engaged. Thus early did “the gift of narration,” for which women are somewhat distinguished, manifest itself. It is, however, probable that, for ages, the ruggedness of our vernacular language presented an insuperable barrier to extensive original composition; and, therefore, we are not surprised that the learned women of ancient times should have chiefly employed themselves in transcribing and translating, which they did to a very considerable extent.

During the fifteenth century one original female writer appeared: this was the Lady Juliana Berners, sister to Richard Lord Berners, and prioress of the nunnery of Sopewell, near St. Alban's. Holinshed speaks of her as “a gentlewoman endued with excellent gifts of body and mind.” She wrote, in verse, treatises on Hawking,

\* “Intellectual Condition of Women in England,” in the Anglo-Saxon times. — Miss H. Lawrence.

Hunting, and Heraldry; and her works were held in such esteem that they were published when printing was first introduced, and a press set up at St. Alban's. "The Boke of St. Alban's," as it was called, was published in small folio in 1495, some say 1461. There is a doubt whether these works were indeed original, or merely translations from the French, though the personal love of field-sports which characterised Juliana (strangely enough, when we consider her sacred calling and literary tastes) might be considered strong presumptive evidence that they were the genuine effusions of her mind. Warton says somewhat contemptuously, "From an abbess disposed to turn author we might more reasonably have expected a manual of meditations for the closet, or select rules for making salves, or distilling strong waters. But the diversions of the field were not thought inconsistent with the character of a religious lady of this eminent rank, who resembled an abbot in respect of exercising manorial jurisdiction, and who hawked and hunted in common with other ladies of distinction."

This book was reprinted in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but has become very scarce: Dr. John Moore, Bishop of Norwich, had it in his library. There is another at Cambridge. The MS. that Warton quotes is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

Margaret Beaufort, the patroness of letters before named, translated two devotional works from the French. She was the third female writer that England produced. Her charities were as great as her zeal for education; but mistaken zeal and superstition were manifest in the regret she expressed that she had not lived at the time of the crusades.

We have seen that Caxton had previously printed the works of one female writer, "Christina of Pisa," whose "wise and wholesome proverbs" were thought worthy of being translated by so accomplished a scholar as Anthony Lord Rivers.

Lady Joanna Lumley, daughter of the Earl of Arundel, and wife of Lord Lumley, made some translations of Greek orations into Latin, and also translated the *Iphigenia* of Euripides into English. The date of her death is not known, but it occurred before that of her father in 1579.

Undoubtedly the most eminent female writer of the first half of the sixteenth century was Sir Thomas More's daughter, Mrs. Margaret Roper. She was the able assistant of her father. Latin epistles, orations, and poems, were the fashion of the age, and in these she excelled. Some treatises of hers were thought equal to her father's; one in particular, "Of the four last Things," showed so much judgment and force of reasoning, that Sir Thomas More sincerely

protested it was better than a discourse he had written upon the same subject, and which in consequence he never finished. She translated Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History from Greek into Latin. This laborious work was afterwards translated from Latin into English by her daughter, Mary Roper. Dying at the comparatively early age of thirty-six, Mrs. Margaret Roper certainly left an imperishable name for learning, industry, and filial piety. Her daughter, above alluded to, inherited her mother's love of learning. Neither mother nor daughter, however, left any evidence that they favoured the fast-spreading principles of the Reformation.

In 1545-6, one or two years after the death of Mrs. Margaret Roper, a terrible scene was witnessed in England. Anne Askew or Ayscough, a young woman of great piety and learning, suffered martyrdom for her religious opinions. She had been a reader of the Bible from her childhood; and the doctrines of the reformers being much canvassed, she was able, from her knowledge of Scripture, to confirm the truths they taught. Domestic trials of a bitter kind mingle with the sad history of her sufferings and death for conscience' sake. Her eldest sister had been betrothed to a Mr. Kyme, a zealous Romanist. The father had paid part of his daughter's marriage portion, when the death of the young lady released the

bridegroom elect. The father, not liking to lose the portion he had paid, compelled Anne, much against her will, to accept the hand of her intended brother-in-law, he being nothing loth. Though forced into this union, the young wife fulfilled her duties in an exemplary manner; but dared not violate her conscience by conformity to her husband's religious sentiments. This so offended him that he drove her violently from his house, and denounced her to the priests. She came to London to seek the protection of those in power who professed to favour the Protestant cause. Her husband's malice, seconded by the priests, pursued her: she was examined concerning her belief, which was found, according to their notions, heretical. Imprisonment followed, no friend being permitted to speak with her. At last a cousin, Mr. Britayne, succeeded in bailing her. She was, however, apprehended again, and refusing to retract her principles, was put to the torture in the hope that she would discover the names of some ladies of quality who were of her opinion. But though racked until, as she says, she "was well-nigh dead," she refused either to change her faith or betray her friends, and she was then sentenced to be burned. At the very stake letters were brought offering her the king's pardon if she would recant. Her reply was

simple and steadfast. "That she came not thither to deny her Lord and Master."

The night before her martyrdom she composed a hymn which, though rugged, is not only interesting as one of the earliest poems in our language composed by a woman, but for the sentiments and the circumstances of the writer.

THE HYMN ANNE ASKEWE MADE THE NIGHT  
BEFORE HER EXECUTION.\*

Like as an armed knight  
Appointed to the field,  
With this world will I fight,  
And Faith shall be my shield.

Faith is that weapon strong,  
Which will not fail at need ;  
My foes, therefore, among  
With it will I proceed.

If Faith be had in strength  
And force of Christ's own way,  
It will prevail at length,  
Though devils all say nay.

Faith ! if the fathers old  
Obtained right witness,  
Will make me very bold,  
To fear not earth's distress.

I now rejoice in heart,  
And Hope bids me do so ;  
For Christ will take my part,  
And ease me of my woe.

\* These verses are slightly modernized.

Lord, thou say'st, "Whoso will knock,  
 To them will I attend :"  
 Therefore undo the lock,  
 And thy strong power send.

Alas ! more enemies, I have  
 Than hairs upon my head ;  
 Let them not me deprave,  
 But fight thou in my stead.

On Thee my care I cast,  
 For all their cruel spite ;  
 I care not for their haste,  
 Since Thou art my delight.

Like some, I'll never list,  
 My anchor to let fall  
 For every drizzling mist —  
 My ship's substantial.

I'm little used to write  
 In either prose or rhyme ;  
 Yet will I show one sight,  
 That I saw in my time.

I saw a royal throne,  
 Where justice ought to sit,  
 But in her stead was one,  
 Of mighty cruel wit.

Engulph'd was righteousness,  
 As by the raging flood —  
 Satan with all eagerness  
 Suck'd up the guiltless blood.

Then thought I, "Jesus, Lord !  
 When thou shalt judge us all,

Hard is it to record,  
On these men what will fall!

“Yet, Lord, I thee desire,  
For that they do to me,  
Let them not taste the hire  
Of their iniquity.”

It is impossible that such women as flourished during that age could have lived and died in vain. The times, also, were eventful in other matters. New regions had been discovered, and the spirit of enterprise was strong, while the principles of the reformers had spread on every side. The seeds sown by Wickliffe two hundred years previously, and which had long germinated almost imperceptibly, now sprung up and yielded an abundant harvest. The scales of ignorance that had too long blinded the people, fell off, and their eyes were opened. Then came the great era of the Reformation, an event scarcely less important to literature than to religion, inasmuch as a noble literature is likely to be the product of a pure and holy faith.



## CHAP. IV.

THE REFORMATION, AND THE LITERARY ACTIVITY OF  
ITS ERA.

WICKLIFFE'S 160 or 200 manuscripts had been hunted up and safely burned in England and in Bohemia, and their ashes scattered, like those of their author, to the four winds of heaven; but the spirit in those writings, being the spirit of truth, was indestructible, and was destined in due time to be embodied in a worthy successor.

About thirty years after printing was invented in Germany, and twelve years after it had been introduced into England, Martin Luther was born —

“The solitary monk that shook the world.”

Luther's early personal history is brief but interesting. Born in poverty at Eisleben, in Saxony, of honest, intelligent, strict parents; want and work were his inheritance. A mind at once strong and active manifested itself, even in childhood; and the father, poor labourer as he was, determined his son should be a scholar. He went to the school; but there learning was made as re-

pulsive as possible by a brutal teacher. Still the boy persevered; obtained access ultimately to higher schools of learning, though obliged, as the custom was, to beg his bread with the poor scholars who in Germany used to sing and chant before the doors of the benevolent. His mind became deeply exercised on the subject of religion. He found nothing in the classics or the writings of the schoolmen to satisfy the craving of a soul that felt its need of a Saviour. At length he fell upon an old Latin Bible, and opening on the history of Samuel,—the child dedicated by his pious mother to the Lord,—he read and read again and again. What light was falling on his darkened soul! Still his conversion did not take place then. The sudden death of his friend Alexis roused him to a deeper sense of his own condition as a sinner. “Was he himself prepared to die, if so suddenly smitten?” was a question conscience put with terrible distinctness. Soon after a terrific thunder-storm placed him in deadly peril. The lightning glared in upon Luther’s soul, and kindled a fire of dread that nothing but the knowledge of a Saviour could appease. Fortunately he knew where to get this knowledge. The writings and preaching of the cloister were both vain and empty: he could not allay his appetite with the husks that the swine did eat: but in the neglected old book—the Latin version of the Holy Scrip-

there—he found his comfort, his cure, his guide. Henceforth he needed no other. Forsaking all secular studies, he entered a monastery, and devoted himself to God.

Think of an earnest spirit full of the divine knowledge he had gained, — a faithful preacher of Christ, — hearing that Tetzel the monk, in order to raise money for the Pope, had come with indulgences from Rome. The very offer to sell people the permission to commit sins with impunity was an abomination too great to be borne. Tetzel was doubtless some such man as “The Pardoner” our Chaucer had described and deservedly derided 150 years before in England.

Luther did not laugh deridingly, as the poet had done; he denounced, in righteous indignation and solemn earnest, the unholy traffic. He preached against it. What he preached it behoved him to maintain, and to explain also, in writing. The matter spread rapidly. Priests were alarmed, people were convinced. Then followed examinations before councils, controversies among scholars and divines, and a commotion every where that had no precedent.

In England our king, Henry VIII., thought proper to enter the lists as a disputant, and wrote a thesis disproving — or attempting to do so — Luther's doctrines; and the Pope, glad of a new ally, gave him the title of


“Defender of the Faith,” which our monarchs yet bear. When kings become authors and enter on polemics, we are sure that the example will be followed. Hence learning, authorship, and the study of divinity, became fashionable; and as any thing is better than stagnation, good results followed. Whoever could read, whether men or women, entered into the subject: nothing else interested them. Henry imagined that, being a king, his treatise would be sufficient to crush a poor enthusiastic monk. He wrote, it was said, with the sceptre. He little knew the spirit of the Reformer, and was startled to find that Luther replied with a tone as high as his own, and arguments based only on the Scriptures. Many endeavoured to dissuade Luther from replying to Henry, the benignant Melancthon among others. But Luther said, “I wo’nt be gentle toward the king of England; I know it is useless to humble myself, to compromise, to entreat, and try peaceful measures.” He showed that Henry supported his statements merely by decrees and doctrines of men. “As to me,” he says, “I do not cease to cry, the Gospel, the Gospel — Christ, Christ.”

The king, incensed, exclaimed, such a heretic should perish,—he deserved to be burnt; and he sent an ambassador, with a letter to the Elector, and to the Dukes of Saxony, urging some extreme measures, saying, “What is this doctrine which

he calls evangelical other than the doctrine of Wickliffe? Now, most honoured uncles, I know how your ancestors have laboured to destroy it: they pursued it as a wild beast in Bohemia, and, driving it till it fell into a pit, they shut it in there, and barricaded it. You will not, I am sure, let it escape through your negligence."

Henry was about thirty-one when he wrote against Luther; meanwhile his passions were to give, ultimately, nearly as great an impetus to the Reformation—though from what different motives!—as the zeal and faithfulness of Luther.

Sir Thomas More entered also into the contest, and attacked Luther with a coarse ribaldry that is in our day utterly unreadable. That so elegant a scholar and so virtuous a man could have ever written in such a style, is to be explained only on the principle that the age was learned but not refined, vehement and disputatious rather than argumentative; and that a latitude of expression was indulged even by women—virtuous and high-born women—that to modern readers is perfectly revolting. Yet Sir Thomas More was far beyond his age, and better than his creed, in reference to toleration. In his "Utopia"—a philosophical romance, in which he supposed the existence of a pure and perfect state—he certainly propounded the doctrine of freedom of opinion. He remarks: "At the first constitution of their



government, Utopus having understood, that before his coming among them, the old inhabitants had been so engaged in great quarrels concerning religion, by which they were so divided among themselves, that he found it an easy thing to conquer them, since, instead of uniting their forces against him, every different party in religion fought by themselves. After he had subdued them, he made a law that every man might be of what religion he pleased, and might endeavour to draw others to it by the force of argument, and by amicable and modest ways, but without bitterness against those of other opinions, but that he ought to use no other force but that of persuasion, and was neither to mix it with reproaches nor violence; and such as did otherwise were to be condemned to banishment or slavery.

“ This law made Utopus, not only for preserving the public peace, which he saw suffered much daily contentions and irreconcilable heats, but because he thought the interests of religion itself required it. And supposing that only one religion was really true, and the rest false, he imagined that the native force of truth would at last break forth and shine bright, if supported only by the strength of argument, and attended to with a gentle and unprejudiced mind; while, on the other hand, if such debates were carried on with violence and tumults, as the most wicked are always the

most obstinate, so the best and most holy religion might be choked with superstition, as corn is with the briars and thorns."

It is one thing, however, to hold a principle as a correct theory, and another to carry it out in practice. Sir Thomas More was one of the most elegant prose writers of his age, and his works were calculated to minister to that love of reading which then began to prevail. He perished, as is well known, for conscientiously refusing to acknowledge the king's supremacy; but his useful life helped forward the cause of human improvement; and even his opposition to the Reformation was overruled by Providence to the awakening of inquiry and the eliciting of truth.

Of this period Milton says: — "When I recall to mind, at last, after so many dark ages, wherein the huge overshadowing train of error had almost swept all the stars out of the firmament of the church; how the bright and blissful Reformation, by divine power, strook through the black and settled night of ignorance and anti-christian tyranny; methinks a sovereign and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him that reads or hears, and the sweet odour of the returning gospel imbathes his soul with the fragrancy of heaven. Then was the sacred Bible sought out of the dusty corners where profane falsehood and neglect had thrown it; the schools opened; divine

and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues; the princes and cities trooping apace to the new-erected banner of salvation; the martyrs, with the irresistible might of weakness, shaking the powers of darkness, and scorning the fiery rage of the old red dragon."

Those who, in reading the lives of the reformers, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Knox, hold that Cranmer was less consistent than these, would do well to remember that Henry VIII. was a very different potentate to any other the reformers had to contend with — a tyrant with sufficient learning to make him subtle and dangerous. His idea of a reformation was putting down the pope and setting up himself. He was for the people reading the Scriptures if that led them to ignore the pope's supremacy, and to despise monkery; but if that same reading led them to perceive that king Henry's life was wrong, why then he took the Bible from them, as a dangerous book, unfit for their perusal. He devised doctrinal works for the people that were to supersede the Bible. One of these was entitled, "Articles devised by the King's Highness to stablish Quietness and Unity, and to avoid contentious Opinions;" another, "A necessary Doctrine and Erudicion for any Christian Man, set forth by the King's Majesty of England."

"Henry the Eight by the grace of God Kynge of Englande, France, and Irelande, Defendour of the



Faythe, and in earthe of the churche of Englande, and also of Irelande, supreme head; unto all his faythfull and lovyng subiectes sendeth greetynge." Then follows a preface of six pages, because the humble and holy Harry "perceivynge that in the tyme of knowledge, the devyll (who ceaseth not in all tymes to vex the worlde) hath attended to return ageyn, (as the parable in the gospel shewith) into the hous purged and censed, accompanied with seven worse spirites, and hypocrisie and superstition beinge excluded and put away, we fynd entered into some of our peoples hartes *an inclination to sinister under standynge of scripture, presumption, arrogancye, carnall libertie, and contention*; we be therefore constrained for the reformation of theym in tyme, and for avoidynge of such diversitie in opinions as by the said evill spirites might be ingendred to set furth with thadvise of our clergie such a doctrine and declaration of the true knowlage of God and his worde, with the principall articles of our relygion, as wherby all men may uniformly be ledde and taught the true understandynge of that, which is necessary for every christen man to know, for the orderynge of himselfe in this lyfe agreeably to the will and plesure of Almighty God."

Meanwhile we know that books and tracts, explaining the principles of the reformers, got into circulation. Poor Anne Bullen, as yet a merry


maiden in her father's house — Hever Castle, was fond of reading them. Anne Askew, as we have before stated, in her happy studious girlhood, at Kelsay, in Lincolnshire, with a deeper feeling of their truth, was engaged in a similar perusal. And in Kent there was another young girl, Joan Boucher, who was an inquirer after religious truth; and if she did not succeed very clearly in explaining to others what her sentiments really were, yet evidently she trusted in Christ and not in priests; and if she could not learnedly dispute for her religion, she was willing to die for it; — which she did, three years after the martyrdom of Anne Askew. No facts are more significant of the spread of a spirit of inquiry, than that, in the castle of the nobleman, and the remote house of the country gentleman, the young female members of the household should be seeking diligently after books, and studying the writings of the learned men of the time.

The pulpit in many places helped this spirit of inquiry. The voice of Latimer had sounded in the ears of thousands — nay more, had carried truth into the inmost recesses of many hearts.

The persecuting spirit of Henry is manifest not only in reference to those who differed from him in religion, but to all who aroused his suspicion or his envy. Hence the fate of the accomplished Earl of Surrey will add, if any thing can add, to

the opprobrium of his name. This young nobleman, disliking, probably, the polemics of the times, and with an ardent love of poetry and the fine arts, visited the land where he could most successfully gratify his taste — Italy. His residence there was an annoyance to the king, who detested the Italians; and when, on his return to his native land, he brought some Italians with him, the king believed they came as spies, employed by his enemy, Cardinal Pole. The earl's relationship to Catherine Howard, the king's frail wife, was another offence; and probably the accomplishments which made Surrey the idol of the young and gay stimulated Henry's dislike. He pretended that Surrey aspired to the hand of the Princess Mary, and on that and other frivolous charges, brought this gifted young nobleman to the block.

The Earl of Surrey introduced blank verse into our poetic literature; though he most admired the sonnet, and transplanted that graceful exotic from Italy to our comparatively rugged clime. The Italians have a passionate admiration of this little poem, that requires a thought to be expressed in fourteen lines. But it was long considered that a sonnet on the Italian model was unsuited to the genius of our language. Even Shakspeare seemed to feel the difficulty of the numerous rhymes, and his sonnets are constructed



on the plan of three four-line verses of alternate rhymes, ending with a couplet. Milton's sonnets are perfect in structure. The modern poets, male and female, have carried this kind of composition to a very high degree of perfection.

A romantic history attaches to the Earl of Surrey. He was called the English Petrarch, chiefly because he celebrated the fair Geraldine in his sonnets, as Petrarch had celebrated his Laura. There was an air of mystery, however, thrown over this attachment; but modern research has discovered that the fair Geraldine was the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, afterwards the wife of the Earl of Lincoln.

Besides his sonnets, the Earl of Surrey translated the second book of Virgil's *Æneid* into blank verse, and gave a version of the *Ecclesiastes*.

His poetical paraphrase of the 73rd Psalm is interesting as being one of the earliest specimens of metrical rendering of the Scriptures: we subjoin a few stanzas.

*Quam bonus Israel, Deus.*—Psalm lxxiii.

THOUGHNE, Lord, to Israell  
 Thy graces plenteous be,  
 I meane to such, with pure intent,  
 As fix their trust in The;  
 Yet whiles the faith did faynt  
 That shold have been my guyde,  
 Lyke them that walk in slipper pathes,  
 My feet began to slyde:

Whiles I did grudge at those  
 That glorey in their golde,  
 Whose lothsom pryde rejoyseth welth  
 In quiet as they wolde.  
 To se by course of yeres  
 What nature doth appere,  
 The palayces of princely fourme  
 Succede from heire to heire.

When I behelde their pryde,  
 And slackness of thy hand,  
 I gan bewaile the wofull state  
 Wherin thy chosèn stand ;  
 And as I sought wherof  
 Thy sufferaunce, Lord, shold groo,  
 I found no witt could perce so far,  
 Thy holy domes to knoo ;

And that no mysteryes  
 Nor dought could be distrust,  
 Till I com to the holly place,  
 The mansion of the just ;  
 Where I shall se what end  
 Thy justice shall prepare,  
 For such as buyld on worldly welth,  
 And dye their colours faire.

Oh ! how their ground is false,  
 And all their buylding vayne ;  
 And they shall fall, their power shall faile  
 That did their pryde mayntayne,  
 As charged harts with care, '  
 That dreme some pleasaunt tourne,  
 After their sleape fynd their abuse,  
 And to their plaint retourne :

So shall their glorye faade ;  
 Thy sword of vengeaunce shall  
 Unto their dronken eyes in blood  
 Disclose their errours all.  
 In other succour, then,  
 O Lord, why should I trust ;  
 But only thyn, whom I have found  
 In thy behight so just ?

And suche for drede or gayne  
 As shall thy name refuse,  
 Shall perishe with their golden godds  
 That did their harts seduce ;  
 Where I, that in thy worde  
 Have set my trust and joye,  
 The high reward that longs thereto  
 Shall quietlye enjoye :

And my unworthye lypps,  
 Inspired with thy grace,  
 Shall thus forespeke thy secret works,  
 In sight of Adams race.

Of the mental activity of this period an admirable writer\* has said of the Reformation, " This event gave a mighty impulse and increased activity to thought and inquiry, and agitated the inert mass of accumulated prejudices throughout Europe. The effect of the concussion was general ; but the shock was greatest in this country. It toppled down the full-grown, intolerable abuses of cen-


\* William Hazlitt's " Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth."

turies at a blow, heaved the ground from under the feet of bigoted faith and slavish obedience; and the roar and clashing of opinions, loosened from their accustomed hold, might be heard like the noise of an angry sea, and has never yet subsided. Germany first broke the spell of misbegotten fear, and gave the watchword; but England joined the shout and echoed it back with her island voice, from her thousand cliffs and craggy shores, in a longer and a louder strain. With that cry the genius of Great Britain rose and threw down the gauntlet to the nations. There was a mighty fermentation; the waters were out; public opinion was in a state of projection; liberty was held out to all to think and speak the truth. Men's brains were busy, their spirits stirring, their hearts full, and their hands not idle. Their eyes were opened to expect the greatest things, and their ears burned with curiosity and zeal to know the truth, that the truth might make them free. The death blow that had been struck at scarlet vice and bloated hypocrisy loosened their tongues, and made the talismans and love tokens of popish superstition, with which she had beguiled her followers and committed abominations with the people, fall harmless from their necks.

“The translation of the Bible was the chief engine in the great work. It threw open, by a

secret spring, the rich treasures of religion and morality which had been there locked up as in a shrine. It revealed the visions of the prophets and conveyed the lessons of inspired teachers to the meanest of the people. It gave them a common interest in the common cause. Their hearts burned within them as they read. It gave a *mind* to the people by giving them common subjects of thought and feeling. It cemented their union of character and sentiment. It created endless diversity and collision of opinion. It found objects to employ their faculties, and a motive, in the magnitude of the consequences attached to them, to exert the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of truth, and the most daring intrepidity in maintaining it. Religious controversy sharpens the understanding by the subtlety and remoteness of the topics it discusses, and braces the will by their infinite importance. We perceive in the history of this period a nervous, masculine intellect. No levity, no feebleness, no indifference; or if there were, it is a relaxation from the intense activity which gives a tone to its general character."

Such were the effects arising from the Bible being thrown open to the people of England. It was not, however, all at once that they obtained that inestimable boon. The importance of the subject demands a separate chapter.





## CHAP. V.

## THE BIBLE AND ITS TRANSLATORS.

THE oldest printed Bible in Europe is that known as the Mazarin Bible. The earliest practisers or inventors of the art of printing resolved on this great work, and brought it out as early as 1455-6, or some assert even earlier. The learned historian of the middle ages says, "We may see in imagination this venerable and splendid volume leading up the crowded myriads of its followers, and imploring as it were a blessing on the new art by dedicating its first fruits to the service of Heaven."\*

The first English translation of the Bible that was printed was set forth in May 6. 1541, with a grave and pious preface of Archbishop Cranmer, and authorised by the king's (Henry VIII.) proclamation. Seconded also with instructions from the king "to prepare the people to receive benefit the better from so heavenly a treasure," it was called "the Bible of the greater volume, rather *commended* than *commanded* to the

\* "Literature of the Middle Ages," vol. i. p. 151.

people.”\* Six of these bibles were chained in St. Paul’s in convenient places. Those country parishes who could afford to purchase this precious treasure chained it to a desk, and the zeal of the people to hear it read was wonderful. Artisans and labourers assembled to listen to the reading. There might be seen the grey-haired sire and the eager youth, the mother hushing her awed and wondering children, the feeble grandame and the blooming maiden, all silent and intent, drinking in the inspired words with thirsty ears. Nor was it only within the building that the Bible was read. The spacious porch of many a country church would hold a goodly gathering, who, surrounding the reader, would listen perhaps all the more intently that it was not a mere formal service.

The clergy were not the only readers to the people. Any man who could read (the attainment was rare then among the people of England) was pressed into this sacred service. What a new tide of life was flowing in upon them as they listened! Not long before, they had been constrained to listen to an unintelligible formula in a foreign language. This was the only utterance they had heard associated with the worship of the Most High; and the rapid and prosy homily that suc-

\* Fuller’s “Church History,” book vii. p. 387.

ceeded was nearly as empty and unsatisfactory. Now it was not *dead* but *living* words that vibrated through them, quickening the pulse of the most supine, softening the most hardened, comforting the sad, instructing the ignorant. There was a portion for all: truths so simple that "the way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein," — truths so forcible, that they were "as a hammer breaking the rocky heart in twain," — truths so tender, that the mourner felt, "as one whom his mother comforteth, even so the Lord comforteth his people," — truths so encouraging, that they called, saying, "Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely," — truths so just, and equal, and spiritual, that they announced there remained "no more bond or free, male or female, but all are one in Christ Jesus."

The influence that this book had upon the people may be inferred from an interesting account of William Malden, inserted in Strype's "Memorials of Cranmer." "When the king first allowed the Bible to be set forth to be read in churches, immediately several poor men in the town of Chelmsford, in Essex, where his father lived, and he was born, bought the New Testament, and on Sundays sat reading of it in the lower end of the church. Many would flock about them to hear their reading; and he (William Malden), among the rest, being then but fifteen years old, came

every Sunday to hear the glad and sweet tidings of the Gospel. But his father, observing it once, fetched him away angrily, and would have him to say the Latin Matins with him, which grieved him much. This put him upon the thoughts of learning to read English, that so he might read the New Testament himself, which, when he had by diligence effected, he and his father's apprentice bought the New Testament, joining their stocks together; and to conceal it laid it under the straw bed, and read it at convenient times. One night, his father being asleep, he and his mother chanced to discourse concerning the crucifix, and the form of kneeling down to it, and knocking on the breast and holding up the hands to it when it came by in procession. This, he told his mother, was plain idolatry against the commandment of God, where he saith, 'Thou shalt not make any graven image, nor bow down to it, nor worship it.' His mother, enraged at him for this, said, 'Wilt thou not worship the cross which was about thee when thou wert christened, and must be laid on thee when thou art dead?' In this heat the mother and son departed, and went to their beds. The sum of this evening's conference she presently repeats to her husband, which he, impatient to hear, and boiling in fury against his son for denying the worship due to the cross, rose up forthwith, and goes into his son's chamber, and, like a mad zealot, taking

him by the hair of his head, pulled him out of the bed and whipped him unmercifully. And when the young man bore this beating with a kind of joy, considering it was for Christ's sake, and shed not a tear, his father, seeing that, was more enraged, and ran down and fetched an halter and put it about his neck, saying he would hang him. At length, with much entreaty of the mother and brother, he left him half dead."

Coverdale and Tyndale were the translators of this Bible. They had removed to the continent in order to enjoy greater opportunities of study and facilities for printing and publishing the great work on which they were engaged. At Antwerp Tyndale was seized as a heretic and imprisoned, and though great efforts were made in his favour, it was in vain. He was condemned, first strangled, and his remains burned near Antwerp. So great was his zeal, learning, and intrepidity, that he was styled the Apostle of England. This translation of the Bible was corrected by John Rogers, the compiler of the Child's Primer, afterwards a distinguished divine in king Edward's reign, and the first who was doomed to the stake in Mary's time.

We have seen, however, that king Henry thought proper to interdict the Bible, after it had once been allowed,—an interdict more likely to make the people ponder the words they had heard, and to sharpen their anxiety to have this treasure

again restored to them. An imprisoned thought once set at liberty can never be recaptured.

The next translation of the Bible was given out in the reign of Edward VI., in 1549, and another edition two years later, neither of them divided into verses; and a third in the reign of Elizabeth. The latter was called "the Bishops' Bible," in consequence of its having been elaborately corrected by the learned divines of that time; and it was substantially the same as that printed in James's time. It must, however, be remembered, that Elizabeth, on her accession to the throne, was far from willing that the laity and common people should have the Scriptures. Like her father, she preferred thinking for the people in matters of Faith, rather than permitting them to think for themselves. This was manifested when, on her releasing some prisoners at her coronation, Sir John Rainsforth (a kind of privileged buffoon), being set on by others, said, "That now this good time, when prisoners were delivered, four prisoners, amongst the rest, mought have their liberty, who were like enough to be kept still in hold." The queen asked "who they were?" and he said, "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who had long been imprisoned in the Latin tongue, and now he desired they mought go abroad among the people in English." The Queen answered, with a grave countenance: "It were good, Rainsforth, they

were spoken with themselves, to know of them whether they would be set at liberty.”\*

The last translation, in the reign of James, was the work of forty-seven learned men, resident at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge, divided into six companies, and having select portions assigned them; the king drawing up directions for their all meeting to confer on any doubtful and difficult passage, and also sending a notification to all who were skilful in the tongues to send in their observations to the company. “The Bishops’ Bible” was to be followed, principally, in the translation; but the other translations,—Tyndale’s, Coverdale’s, Matthew’s, Whitchurch’s, and Geneva,—when they agreed better with the text. This translation was begun in 1607, and completed 1611.

The division of the Bible into chapters was the work of Cardinal Hugo de Sacto Caro, in the thirteenth century, about the year 1250. The division of the New Testament into verses was made by Robert Stephens, a printer, 1551. He made this division, it is said, while he was travelling on the Continent, as the amusement of his leisure. A fact that has caused some comment: that so important a work should have been executed by a travelling printer; but it must ever be borne

\* Bacon.

in mind that the early printers were men of erudition, and that the art of printing undoubtedly then ranked nearly on a level with the liberal professions, the greatest scholars thinking it no dishonour to be correctors of the press. The division of the Hebrew Bible into verses was made by Athias, a learned Jew of Amsterdam, in 1661. The Bible that was published in 1611 underwent a most rigid scrutiny and correction in 1769, and from this last corrected edition our ordinary modern Bible is taken.

Thus, at length, the great truth that Wickliffe had enunciated more than 240 years before,—that the Scriptures alone were the rule of faith, and that the people ought to have them, an opinion he maintained by diligently translating them; — at length this truth triumphed. The people of England had the Bible. The struggle had been long; and during the last sixty-six or seventy years,—that is, from the time that Henry put forth, and then withdrew, the Scriptures,—the contest had been severe; but at length the victory was won. The progress of mind in every department of mental effort during that period of struggle, furnishes the most important and interesting section of our literary history.



## CHAP. VI

## THE BIBLE.—ITS LITERARY INFLUENCE.

THE spiritual influence of the Bible is a theme so vast and various that the wisest might say,—“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, I cannot attain unto it.” Its literary influence, however, can very distinctly be traced even in works of a general and popular character. It was not only the divine and the scholar that felt this influence, the rays of this divine light kindled the poet's mind. How could it be otherwise? What were the epics of classic antiquity? The quarrels and battles of wrangling princes, and the interference of gods and goddesses all of whom were of the earth, earthy. What were the pastorals, the satires, the histories, the odes, the orations, of Greek and Latin writers when compared with the records of the Bible? Here were histories the most graphic and affecting, odes the most sublime, prophecies the most marvellous, epics the most perfect, pastorals the most lovely, biographies the most interesting, arguments the most powerful, sermons the most simple, speeches the most impressive, proverbs the most pithy, letters the most forcible :

every form of composition had here its accurate model.

The epic, in the book of Job.

The dramatic, in Esther, and Joseph, and Ruth.

The historical, in the writings of Moses, Samuel, and Ezra.

The lyric, in the divine odes of David.

The didactic and pastoral, in the writings of Solomon.

The philosophic and argumentative, in the orations and letters of Paul.

The tender and simple, in the words and lessons of Him who "spake as never man spake."

To say nothing of the grand prophetic utterances that cannot be classified; the "wild seraphic fire" that brought down to earth the light and glow of heaven. The influence of this book of books upon the mind (apart from the soul) is manifest in the fact, that from the time the Bible began to be tolerably well known we have had a rich and copious national literature. And while too often it has happened that the gifted have been content with the mere literary and poetic beauty of the one marvellous book; and have fulfilled the inspired words, that the real meaning of "these things were hid from the wise and prudent;" still it is interesting and instructive to trace the mental benefits it conferred.

The greatest divines that England has pro-

duced appeared either during the period when the Bible was obtaining its freedom of the realm, or very soon after. Hooker, Bishop Hall, Jewel, Jeremy Taylor, Bishop Beveridge, Fuller—what an influence their works must have had in elucidating Scripture! Hooker, by his “Ecclesiastical Polity;” Hall, by his admirable “Contemplations;” Taylor, by his rich, eloquent, and poetic disquisitions; Beveridge, by his “Private Thoughts upon Religion and a Christian Life;” Fuller by his quaint yet admirable “Church History.”

That age also gave us in the writings of Isaac Walton some biographies that for graphic power and elegant simplicity have never been surpassed. The lives of Hooker, of Dr. Donne, of George Herbert, and others, will remain monuments of the cheerful piety and the tender reverence of Walton himself, as much as a worthy testimony of departed excellence.

The maxim of St. Paul, “Prove all things,” was applied by a philosopher of that age to secular studies: and it would be difficult to exaggerate the benefit England has derived from the carrying out of that maxim. The great Lord Bacon taught that physical science should test and demonstrate all it asserts; and that could only be done by experiment. Before his time scholars had not used their own senses to investigate the laws and properties of matter, but had taken the

testimony of ancient philosophers (particularly Aristotle), and repeated them from age to age. Lord Bacon was the first to show the fallacy of such a plan. He held the sayings and teachings of the ancients at their true value; as stimulants, not sedatives. What they knew was to be suggestive of greater progress to their descendants. The laws of morals, he knew, were revealed in Scripture, and might be capable of an infinite variety of elucidation and application, but of no addition. The laws of matter were hidden in the great volume of nature, and required that man should be a patient reader for himself, trusting his own eyes and not another's. No man more admirably showed that the strength and affection with which people cleave to precedent merit the strong term — Idolatry.

“ Before laying down the rules to be followed in his new, or inductive process, Bacon enumerated the causes of error which he divided into four sets, and distinguished, according to the fashion of the times, by the following fanciful but expressive names :—

Idols of the Tribe.

Idols of the Den.

Idols of the Forum.

Idols of the Theatre.

The *idols of the tribe*, are the causes of error founded on human nature in general. Thus all men have a propensity to find in nature a greater degree of order, simplicity, and regularity, than is actually indicated by observation. This propensity, usually distinguished by the title *spirit of system*, is

one of the greatest enemies to its progress that science has to struggle with.

“The *idols of the den*, are those that sprung from the peculiar character of the individual. Each individual, according to Bacon, has his own dark cave or den, into which the light is imperfectly admitted, and in the obscurity of which an idol lurks, at whose shrine the truth is often sacrificed. Some minds are best adapted to catch the differences, others the resemblances of things, some proceed too rapidly, others too slowly. Almost every person has acquired a partiality for some branch of science, to which he is prone to fashion and force every other.

“The *idols of the forum*, are those which arise out of the intercourse of society, and especially from language, by means of which men communicate with each other. It is well known that words in some measure govern thought, and that we cannot think accurately unless we are able to express ourselves accurately. The same word does not convey the same idea to different persons. Hence many disputes are merely verbal, though the disputants may not be aware of the circumstance.

“The *idols of the theatre*, are the deceptions which have taken their rise from the systems of different schools of philosophy. These errors affected the philosophy of the ancients more than that of the moderns. But they are not yet without their effect, and often act powerfully upon individuals without their being aware of the effect.”\*

The poets of this period might be said to emulate the divines in grandeur, copiousness, and variety. Never have there been so many great

\* Sketch of the Progress of Physical Science by Dr. Thomas Thomson.

names—never has the splendour of the greatest so dimmed the brilliancy of contemporaries. There is one man among poets whom we call our national bard. The greatness of Shakspeare's name causes the general reader to think of him as the sole poet of the time. But it was an age of great poets, and it increases, if any thing can increase, the splendour of Shakspeare's triumph, that he wrote in an age when genius of every kind was most prolific.

Shakspeare had, as his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, thirty-eight dramatic poets.

The literary influence of the Bible is to be traced in the writings (though its spiritual influence is little seen in the lives) of nearly all the dramatic poets of the time.

It is characteristic of the manners and mental circumstances of the age that most of the poets were dramatic writers. Books, though much multiplied comparatively with preceding times, were, however, the luxury of the cultivated few rather than the food of the uneducated many. A reading public did not exist. Oral communication was the only means of influencing the people; so that the stage for the poet was long thought as appropriate as the pulpit for the divine. The monks of the middle ages had first given the people a taste for theatrical amusements. They represented what they called mysteries and moralities,—

subjects generally taken from Scripture histories, interwoven often with heterogeneous and profane incidents. "The creation of the world," "The incarnation and life of the Redeemer," &c., were favourite representations. A kind of heathen Saturnalia mixed up with these shows, and the union of the names of heathen gods and goddesses with apostles and saints, made a jumble in the minds of the spectators that effectually prevented their having any clear idea of the Scripture incidents so miserably deformed, mutilated, and desecrated. Coventry was very celebrated in the middle ages for these miracle plays.

It often happened that the opportunity of thus assembling the people together afforded means for spreading disaffection among them, and creating political disquietude. In the reign of Edward the Sixth, the Papists made use of the stage as a means of counteracting the spread of the Reformation; and (August 6th, 1549, 3d of Ed. VI.,) an act was passed prohibiting plays in the *English* language from being enacted. A hundred years later the dreadful licentiousness and corrupting tendencies of the stage caused a similar prohibition. But parliamentary enactments are a very doubtful means of promoting morality or checking vice. The intelligence and correct feeling of the people themselves are most to be relied on, more particularly the spread of

correct religious knowledge. "For our weapons are not carnal but spiritual, and powerful to the pulling down of strongholds."

A significant fact, that prevents the necessity of many arguments on the tendency of dramatic representations is afforded to us, when we find that the licentious and seductive dramas of Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher were far more popular than the purer compositions of Shakspeare. The expressions of that age were dreadfully coarse. When we think of Queen Elizabeth swearing "her usual oath," and that the ordinary ejaculations with which she interlarded her discourse were such as could not be quoted in the present time, we may feebly imagine what must have been the general manners. A still greater impurity prevailed in the reign of James I. The evil was not restricted to profane words, but manifested itself in indecorous actions. The masks represented at court in honour of the visit of the King of Denmark, brother to Anne, the wife of James, where the most revolting intemperance characterised the scene, sufficiently attest the grovelling taste of the period. The Divine maxim, "Swear not at all," and indeed the Scripture generally as a rule of life, was constantly violated, and the poets too often ministered to the follies rather than corrected the evil of the time. And the very best justification of some



of the severe denunciations of the Puritans in the succeeding time against the stage is found in the fact, that the very titles of some of the plays of the old dramatists are too coarse to be quoted.

During this period we had some valuable contributions to our historical literature. The first printed piece of the history of England had issued from the press of Caxton, commonly called "Caxton's Chronicles," written by Douglas, a monk of Glastonbury, and coming down to the accession of Edward IV.

In 1518, Robert Fabyan, an alderman of London, published his "New Chronicles of England and France." He may be considered the father of English historians. In the reign of Henry VIII., there are two historical works,—Rastell's "Pastime of People," and Sir Thomas More's "Pitiful Life of Edward V.," containing the murder of the princes in the Tower, an epitome of English history. In 1548, the second year of Edward VI., Thomas Hall wrote "The Union of the two Noble and Illustrious Families of Lancaster and York;" which work, the author dying before its publication, was printed and edited by Grafton, an eminent printer of the time.

A more laborious and useful writer than these was Ralph Hollingshed, who employed twenty-four years in writing his "Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland," in two folio volumes.

Sir Walter Raleigh belongs to this period. His "History of the World" is not only valuable of itself, but, as the product of his prison-hours, has an interest apart from the instruction it conveys.

To these names must be added Fox, the martyrologist, whose terrible record of popish persecution in the "Acts and Monuments" has been said "to have confirmed the Reformation." The chronicles of Speed and Stowe, published in the reign of James I., became very popular; and it is interesting to the people of England to know that two men of humble rank (both tailors) made faithful and learned contributions to our historical literature.

Indeed, the history of some of the most eminent men in every department of mind in that age is gratifying as a proof, that the right employment of talents, rather than the mere accidents of birth and wealth, ennobles its possessor. Cranmer, Hooker, Taylor, were all born in humble life, as was Shakspeare. Of these it may be said, —

"They hold the rank no king can give,  
No station can disgrace :  
Nature puts forth her gentlemen,  
And monarchs must give place."

The female poets of this time were all inclined most to devotional themes. Mary Sydney,

Countess of Pembroke, assisted her distinguished brother, Sir Philip Sydney, in a metrical version of the Psalms of David. Lady Mary Worth, also a Sydney, niece of Sir Philip, was the authoress of "Urania, or the Soul's praying Robes." Queen Elizabeth had an ambition to be considered a poet, but her crown dazzled her contemporaries more than her poetic genius, otherwise they never would have dignified her hard cold rhymes with the name of poetry.\*

The following lines, by Lady Elizabeth Carew, are not only superior to the effusions of most female writers of that age, but have also great delicacy of thought and justness of sentiment. Bible truth is very manifest in her stanzas.

#### FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

The fairest action of our human life  
 Is scorning to revenge an injury :  
 For who forgives without a farther strife,  
 His adversary's heart to him doth tie ;  
 And its a firmer conquest truly said,  
 To win the heart than overthrow the head.

If we a worthy enemy do find,  
 To yield to worth it must be nobly done ;  
 But if of baser metal be his mind,  
 In stern revenge there is no honour won ;

---

\* For specimens of the poetry by female writers of the time, see Dyce's 'Specimens of English Poetesses.'

Who would a worthy courage overthrow?  
And who would wrestle with a worthless foe?

We say our hearts are great and cannot yield.  
Because they cannot yield it proves them poor;  
Great hearts are task'd beyond their power but seld,  
The weakest lion will the loudest roar;  
Truth's school for certain doth this same allow,  
High heartedness doth sometimes teach to bow.

A noble heart doth teach a virtuous scorn;  
To scorn to owe a duty overlong,  
To scorn to be for benefits forborn,  
To scorn to lie, to scorn to do a wrong,  
To scorn to bear an injury in mind,  
To scorn a free-born heart slave-like to bind.

But if for wrongs we needs revenge must have,  
Then be our vengeance of the noblest kind.  
Do we his body from our fury save,  
And let our hate prevail against our mind?  
What can against him greater vengeance be,  
Than make his foe more worthy far than he?

Had Mariam scorned to leave a due unpaid,  
She would to Herod then have paid her love,  
And not have been by sullen passion swayed.  
To fix her thoughts: all injury above  
Is virtuous pride. Had Mariam thus been proud,  
Long famous life to her had been allowed.

*From Chorus in Act IV. of Mariam.*

FEMALE VIRTUE.

'Tis not enough for one that is a wife  
To keep her spotless from an act of ill ;  
But from suspicion she should free her life,  
And bare herself of power as well as will.  
'Tis not so glorious for her to be free,  
As by her proper self restrained to be.

When she hath spacious ground to walk upon,  
Why on the ridge should she desire to go ?  
It is no glory to forbear alone  
Those things that may her honour overthrow ;  
But 'tis thankworthy, if she will not take  
All lawful liberties for honour's sake.

*Chorus of Act III. of Mariam.*

## CHAP. VII.

## SPENSER AND SHAKSPEARE, AND THEIR POETIC CONTEMPORARIES.

As the influence of Italy is to be traced in the mental history of Chaucer, so is it equally manifest in that of the Earl of Surrey, to whom we have already adverted, and in Spenser. Surrey was called the English Petrarch, Spenser also was designated the English Ariosto. The "Orlando Furioso" of the distinguished Italian went through sixty editions in the sixteenth century. Its story of knightly achievements and chivalrous gallantry was peculiarly agreeable at a time when the romantic traditions and heroics of the institutions of chivalry were rendered more bewitching and seductive by the halo of antiquity that began to spread around them. Spenser ministered to this taste by adopting the machinery of knight errantry, and the sentiments of chivalry, in his wonderful poem of the "Faëry Queen." His descriptive powers and his moral purpose have been admitted by all critics. Even those who disliked his allegory as too involved and his descriptions as too tedious, do justice to the beauty and variety of his pictures and the moral purpose of his stanzas.

Of his Italian model—Ariosto, Dryden says,—“he neither designed justly, nor observed any unity of action, or compass of time, or moderation in the vastness of his draught: his style is luxurious, without majesty or decency; and his adventures are without the compass of nature and possibility.”\* Some of these faults have been ascribed to Spenser, but his beauties so far outnumber his defects, that it is difficult to find the latter, while the former lie thick on every page.

He intended to personify the cardinal virtues in his great poem; and therefore there is no regular hero or consecutive narrative. Each book, as “Temperance,” “Chastity,” “Magnificence,” &c. has a separate hero or heroine intended to embody the virtue he wishes to present.

The finest of the six books is the first. There the Red Cross Knight is the Militant Christian, beloved by Una, the true Church, and seduced by Deussia, the type of Popery; and when reduced to despair, he is rescued by Una, assisted by Faith, Hope, and Charity. Yet, while this is the meaning, the poem may be, and often is, read without any reference to the allegory, simply for its exquisite beauty.

The chief difficulty to a modern reader arises from the fact that Spenser did not write the

\* Dryden's dedicatory Letter to the Earl of Dorset, prefixed to his translation of Juvenal.

poetic language of his own time, but imitated a more ancient style. He was a profound admirer of Chaucer, and chose to use many words of that earlier period: so that when we compare his verse with that of Shakspeare, his great contemporary, it is difficult to think that they both lived in the same age.

Spenser enriched our poetic literature with a new measure, to which his name has been given, and in which he composed his "Faëry Queen." The Spenserian Stanza is borrowed from the Italian *Ottave Rime*, or stanza of eight lines of Tasso and Ariosto. To these eight lines, a ninth is added in the English measure. It is remarkable that many poets of the succeeding age disliked and condemned the stanza of Spenser as multiplying difficulties by the recurrence of so many similar rhymes in one verse. Modern taste, however, has concurred with Spenser. Thomson wrote his "Castle of Indolence" (his best, though not his most popular poem) in this stanza; as did Beattie his "Minstrel," Mrs. Tighe her "Psyche," Mrs. Hemans her "Forest Sanctuary," Lord Byron his "Childe Harold." Many living poets have also adopted it, and by their triumphs have entirely vindicated Spenser from the charge of having introduced a cumbersome and difficult measure unsuited to our language.



The "Faëry Queen," long as it is, is but a fragment: six books are said to have been lost or destroyed when the poet escaped from Ireland. The incidents of Spenser's life are most affecting. Queen Elizabeth, who was not insensible to the honour of being celebrated by so exquisite a poet, had patronised him. One of her few acts of munificence was that of ordering him a sum of money; which her treasurer, Lord Burleigh, knowing her usual economy, and having no sympathy himself with poets, ventured to grumble at, saying "so much for a song!" Few things in Elizabeth's personal history redound more to her honour than that gift. Subsequently the poet had a grant of three thousand acres of land in the county of Cork. Here he wrote his great allegorical poem. The rebellion of the Earl of Tyrone broke out, and Kilcolman Castle, the residence of Spenser, was burned, he, his wife and family, escaping in such haste and peril, that his infant child was left behind, and perished in the flames. The poet never recovered this calamity: he returned to England broken in heart and fortune, and died a year after.

No genuine lovers of descriptive poetry will complain at the absence of unity in the design of the "Faëry Queen," they will read on and on, forgetful of every thing but the exceeding beauty of the descriptions. Indeed, it is evident that Spenser

never intended to fetter himself with a distinct narrative, but followed on wherever imagination led him, exclaiming—

“The ways through which my weary steps I guide,  
 In this delightful land of Faërie,  
 Are so exceeding spacious and wide;  
 And sprinkled with such sweet variety  
 Of all that pleasant is, to ear or eye;  
 That I, nigh ravished with rare thought's delight,  
 My tedious travel do forget thereby;  
 And when I 'gin to feel decay of might,  
 It strength to me supplies; and cheers my dulled  
 sprite.”

Spenser's two poems of Heavenly Love, and Heavenly Beauty, abound in passages the Christian must delight in. James Montgomery, indeed, says, that these contain the germ of Milton's "Great Argument."\* The following description is peculiarly fine of

## WISDOM.

“There in his bosom Sapience † doth sit,  
 The sovereign darling of the Deity;  
 Clad like a queen in royal robes, most fit  
 For so great power and peerless majesty,  
 And all with gems and jewels gorgeously  
 Adorn'd, that brighter than the stars appear,  
 And make her native brightness seem more clear.

---

\* Montgomery's Christian Poet.

† Wisdom.

“Both Heaven and Earth obey unto her will,  
 And all the creatures which they both contain ;  
 For of her fulness which the world doth fill,  
 They all partake, and do in state remain,  
 As their great Maker did at first ordain,  
 Through observation of her high behest,  
 By which they first were made, and still increast.

“The fairness of her face no tongue can tell,  
 For she the daughters of all woman’s race,  
 And angels too, in beautie doth excel,  
 Reflected on her from God’s glorious face,  
 And more increased by her own goodly grace,  
 That it doth far exceed all human thought,  
 Nor can on earth compared be to ought.

“Let angels which her goodly face behold,  
 And see at will, her sovereign praises sing ;  
 And those most sacred mysteries unfold,  
 Of that fair love of mighty heaven’s King ;  
 Enough is me to admire such heavenly thing,  
 And being thus with her huge love possest,  
 In only wonder of herself to rest.

“But whoso may, thrice happy man him hold  
 Of all on earth, whom God so much doth grace,  
 And lets his own beloved \* to behold ;  
 For in the view of that celestial face  
 All joy, all bliss, all happiness have place.  
 Nor aught on earth can want unto the wight,  
 Who of herself can win that wishful sight.

---

\* Christ “the wisdom of God.”

“ Ah then, my hungry soul! which long hast fed  
 On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,  
 And with false beauties' flattering bait misled,  
 Hast after vain deceitful shadows sought,  
 Which all have fled, and now have left thee nought  
 But late repentance through thy follies brief ;  
 Ah ! cease to gaze on matter of thy grief.

“ And look at last up to that sovereign light,  
 From whose pure beams all perfect beauty springs,  
 That kindleth love in every godly sprite,  
 Even the love of God, which loathing brings  
 Of this vile world, and these gay seeming things ;  
 With whose sweet pleasures being so possessd,  
 Thy straying thoughts henceforth for ever rest.”

Some idea of the linked sweetness long drawn  
 out of Spenser's style in his favourite stanza, may  
 be gathered from his description of

#### AERIAL MUSIC.

“ Eftsoons they heard a most melodious sound  
 Of all that might delight a dainty ear,  
 Such as, at once, might not on living ground,  
 Save in this paradise, be heard elsewhere :  
 Right hard it was for wight that did it hear,  
 To weet what manner music that might be,  
 For all that pleasing is to living ear  
 Was there consorted in one harmony ;  
 Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree.

“ The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,  
 Their notes unto the voice attemperd sweet ;

Th' angelical soft trembling voices, made  
 To th' instruments divine response meet ;  
 The silver sounding instruments did meet  
 With the base murmur of the water's fall ;  
 The water's fall, with difference discreet,  
 Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call ;  
 The gentle warbling wind low answer'd to all."

Sir Philip Sydney, the friend and patron of Spenser, was in the court of Queen Elizabeth what the accomplished Earl of Surrey had been in that of her father—the glass of fashion and the mould of form. His poetry, however, is not read except by the antiquarian. Two faults prevent the modern reader enjoying it—length and artificiality. That was the age, notwithstanding all its literary greatness, of quaint conceits and artificial terms. A plain answer to a plain question was rarely returned in that luxuriant and imaginative time; and Sir Philip Sydney's "Arcadia" is full of this peculiarity, which would weary even in a short work, but is oppressive when it goes through five hundred folio pages. His essay in "Defence of Poesy" is more read in the present day than any other of his writings; and deservedly, for it ranks in beauty, and power, and completeness with Milton's essay on "Unlicensed Printing," and Foster's on "Decision of Character." In his "Defence of Poesy" he mourns that "poesy thus embraced in all other places, should only find in our time a bad welcome in England." After excepting Sackville,

Surrey, and Spenser, he says he does not “remember to have seen many more that have poetical sinews in them. For proof whereof, let but most of the verses be put into prose, and then ask the meaning, and it will be found that one verse did but beget another, without ordering at first which should be at the last; which becomes a confused mass of words with a tinkling sound of rhyme, barely accompanied with reason.” Is our age free from that charge? The following sonnet, both in sentiment and structure, is a favourable specimen of the poetry of this illustrious man, whose life closed early, slain as he was, in his thirty-second year, at the battle of Zutphen.

## FAREWELL TO SPLENDID FOLLIES.

“Leave me, O Love! which reacheth but to dust;  
 And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;  
 Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;  
 Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.  
 Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might  
 To that sweet yoke where lasting freedom's be;  
 Which breaks the clouds, and opens forth the light  
 That doth both shine, and give us sight to see.  
 Oh! take fast hold, let that light be thy guide  
 In this small course which birth draws out of death;  
 And think how ill becometh him to slide,  
 Who seeketh heaven, and comes of heavenly breath.  
 Then farewell world! thine uttermost I see;  
 Eternal love, maintain thy life in me.”

So much has been said and written, enthusiastically, variously, reverentially, and accurately of Shakspeare, that nothing new can be added to the full-voiced testimony. What power he received from nature has been beautifully sketched by the poet Gray.

“Far from the sun and summer gale,  
 In thy green lap \* was *nature's darling* laid :  
 What time, where lucid Avon strayed,  
 To him the mighty mother did unveil  
 Her awful face : the dauntless child,  
 Stretch'd forth his little arms and smil'd.  
 This pencil take, she said, whose colours clear  
 Richly paint the vernal year :  
 Thine, too, these golden keys, immortal boy !  
 This can unlock the gates of joy ;  
 Of horror, that, and thrilling fears ;  
 Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears.”

Shakspeare's obligations to revelation have not been so carefully traced ; and yet it is clearly capable of proof, that the ethics of our great poet were founded on an intimate knowledge of Scripture. The obligations of literature to the Bible are nowhere more manifest than in many of the national bard's writings. What a compendium of evangelical truth is folded up in the brief lines —

“Why, all the souls that are, were forfeit once ;  
 And he that might the 'vantage best have took,  
 Found out the remedy.”

---

\* Britain's.

The following, selected from a multitude, afford full proof of Scripture influence.

## RELIANCE ON GOD.

“God be prais’d, that to believing souls  
Gives light in darkness, comfort in despair.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Let never day nor night unhallow’d pass,  
But still remember what the Lord hath done.”

## PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE.

“Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,  
When our deep plots do fail. And that should teach us  
There’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.

\* \* \* \* \*  
There is a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow.

\* \* \* \* \*  
He that doth the ravens feed,  
Yea providently caters for the sparrow ;  
Will comfort man’s old age.”

## USE OF TALENTS.

“Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before, and after, — gave us not  
That capability, and godlike reason,  
To rust in us unus’d.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Thyself and thy belongings  
Are not thine own so proper, as to waste  
Thyself upon thy virtues, them on thee.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,  
Not light them for ourselves : for if our virtues  
Did not go forth of us, ’twere all alike  
As if we had them not.”



## OBSTINATE GRIEF.

“To persevere

In obstinate lamenting is a course  
Of impious stubbornness : — unmanly grief :  
It shews a will most uncorrect to Heaven ;  
A heart unfortified ; or mind impatient ;  
An understanding simple and unschool'd.  
For what we know must be, and is as common  
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,  
Why should we, in our peevish opposition,  
So take to heart ? — It is a fault to Heaven :  
A fault against the dead ; a fault to nature.”

## RESIGNATION IS TRUE FORTITUDE.

“The highest courage is not to prevent  
The term of life for fear of what may fall ;  
But arm ourselves with patience, and await  
Constant, the providence of that high power  
Which governs us below.”

## DIVINE JUSTICE.

“That high All-seer ! whom men dally with,  
Oft turns their feigned prayer upon their head.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
In the corrupted currents of *this* world,  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
And in worst times the wretched prize itself  
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above ;  
There, is no shuffling : there the action lies  
In its true nature, and we ourselves compell'd,  
E'en to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence.”

## RELIANCE UPON HUMAN SUPPORT.

“O! momentary grace of mortal men,  
Which we more hunt for than the grace of God;  
Who builds his hope in air of your fair looks,  
Lives like a drunken sailor on a mast,  
Ready with every nod to tumble down  
Into the fatal bowels of the deep.”

HUMAN ESTIMATE NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH  
THE MAXIM “HONOUR ALL MEN.”

“In the world’s base judgment,  
There’s not a man for being simply man  
Hath any honour: but ’s honour’d for those honours  
That are without him; as place, riches, favour,  
Prizes of accident as oft as merit.”

## PASSION, UNRULY; A DREADFUL CURSE.

“No severer imprecation against a child than this: Discipline come not near thee; and let thy Passions be thy direction till thy Death.”

## VIRTUE IS CANDID AND MERCIFUL.

“Whoso is just  
He doth with holy abstinence subdue  
That in himself, which he doth spur himself  
To qualify in others.”

## REPUTATION INESTIMABLE.

“The purest treasure mortal times afford  
Is—spotless Reputation; that away,  
Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.  
\* \* \* \* \*



Good name in man and woman  
 Is the immediate jewel of their souls.  
 Who steals our purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;  
 'Twas our's, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands:  
 But he that filches from us our good name  
 Robs us of that which not enriches him,  
 But makes us poor indeed."

#### HUMILITY.

"True goodness in a mortal breast will say—  
 Let me be ignorant, and in nothing good,  
 But graciously to know I am no better."

#### CONTENTMENT.

"The shepherd's homely curds,  
 His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle;  
 His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade;  
 (All which secure and sweetly he enjoys),  
 Is far beyond a prince's delicates;  
 His viands sparkling in a golden cup;  
 His body couch'd in a curious bed;  
 When care, mistrust, and treason wait on him."

#### INEQUALITY.

"O that estates, degrees, and offices,  
 Were not deriv'd corruptly; and that clear honour  
 Were purchas'd by the merit of the wearer!  
 How many then should cover that stand bare;  
 How many be commanded that command!  
 How much low peasantry would then be glean'd  
 From the true seed of honour; and how much honour  
 Pickt from the chaff and ruin of the times,  
 To be new varnish'd!"

## COMMENT ON "SWEAR NOT AT ALL."

"What other oath

Than honesty to honesty engag'd?  
Swear priests and cowards, and such suffering souls  
That welcome wrongs.—Unto bad causes swear  
Such creatures as men doubt. But do not stain  
The even virtue of a good emprise,  
Nor the insuppressive\* mettle of true spirits,  
To think that, or the cause, or the performance,  
Can need an oath."

## MAN.

"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason;  
how vast in faculties; in form and moving how express and  
admirable! in action how like an angel; in apprehension  
how like a god!"

## SELF-CULTURE.

"Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are  
gardeners: so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce,  
set hyssop, and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender  
of herbs or distract it with many, either have it steril with  
idleness or manur'd with industry, why the power, and cor-  
rigible authority of this, lies in our wills."

## MIND ALONE IMMORTAL.

"The cloud-clapt towers; the gorgeous palaces;  
The solemn temples; the great globe itself;  
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind."

---

\* Insuppressible.

## MERCY.

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd ;  
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
 Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest :  
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.  
 'Tis mightiest in the mighty ; and becomes  
 The throned monarch better than his crown :  
 His sceptre shews the force of temporal power,  
 The attribute of awe and majesty,  
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings.  
 But *Mercy* is above this sceptre's sway :  
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings :  
 It is an attribute to God himself !  
 And earthly power doth then shew likest God's  
 When mercy seasons justice. \* \* \* Consider this, —  
 That in the course of justice, none of us  
 Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy,  
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
 The deeds of mercy."

## MAN'S ARIROGANCE.

"Merciful heaven !  
 Thou rather with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt  
 Splitt'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,  
 Than the soft myrtle !— O, but man, proud man,  
 (Drest in a little brief authority,  
 Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,  
 His glassy essence)—like an angry ape,  
 Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,  
 As make the angels weep."

## FAREWELL TO GREATNESS.

“Nay, then, farewell!

I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness;  
 And, from that full meridian of my glory,  
 I haste now to my setting. I shall fall  
 Like a bright exhalation in the evening,  
 And no man see me more.  
 Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness!  
 This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth  
 The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,  
 And bears his blushing honours thick upon him:  
 The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;  
 And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
 His greatness is a ripening,—nips his root,  
 And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,  
 Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,  
 These many summers in a sea of glory,  
 But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride  
 At length broke under me; and now hath left me  
 Weary, and old with service, to the mercy  
 Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.  
 Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:  
 I feel my heart new open'd. O! how wretched  
 Is that poor man, that hangs on princes' favours.  
 There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,  
 That sweet aspect of princes, and our ruin,  
 More pangs and fears than war or women have;  
 And, when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,  
 Never to hope again.”

## THE DANGER OF AMBITION.

“Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear  
 In all my miseries; but thou hast forc'd me,  
 Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.

Let's dry our eyes; and thus far hear me, Cromwell:  
 And, — when I am forgotten, as I shall be,  
 And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention  
 Of me more must be heard of, — say, I taught thee,  
 Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,  
 And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,  
 Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in;  
 A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.  
 Mark but my fall, and that that ruin'd me.  
 Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:  
 By that sin fell the angels; how can man, then,  
 The image of his Maker, hope to win by 't?  
 Love thyself last: cherish those hearts that hate thee:  
 Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
 Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,  
 To silence envious tongues: be just, and fear not.  
 Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,  
 Thy God's, and truth's: then, if thou fall'st, O Crom-  
 well!  
 Thou fall'st a blessed martyr. Serve the king;  
 And, — pr'ythee, lead me in:  
 There take an inventory of all I have,  
 To the last penny; 'tis the king's: my robe,  
 And my integrity to heaven, is all  
 I dare now call my own. O Cromwell, Cromwell!  
 Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal  
 I serv'd my king, He would not in my age  
 Have left me naked to my enemies!"

The ethics of Shakspeare have been far less  
 elucidated than the descriptive beauties that adorn  
 his page. Many, also, have thought only of  
 his faults — the occasional coarseness of expression  
 that deforms his writings; a coarseness from

which no writers of that age are quite free. Such cases he has himself described.

“ There are men  
 Who carrying the stamp of one defect,  
 Their virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
 As infinite as man may undergo,  
 Shall in the general censure take corruption  
 From that particular fault.

\* \* \* \* \*

The dram of base

Doth all the noble substance of worth outweigh,  
 To his own scandal.”

It is not needful to say more on this subject, than that the other dramatic poets of the time of Shakspeare, and succeeding him, are in no sense so pure. Their writings as a whole are unreadable. Notwithstanding their genius, the absence of a moral purpose has injured and nearly destroyed their vitality.

It is not wonderful that a period producing such poets as Spenser and Shakspeare should be rich in minor poets. The names of Drayton, Daniel, and Drummond of Hawthornden (the Scottish Petrarch), would not have been secondary but for the grandeur of the first names—the splendour of the sun hides the radiance of the stars.



## CHAP. VIII.

MINOR POETS BETWEEN THE TIME OF SHAKSPEARE AND  
MILTON.

THE minor poets of the period contemporary with and immediately succeeding Shakspeare, are well worthy of reverential remembrance. Their number was very great. "Ellis reckons up a hundred minor poets of the time, and Drake made a list of two hundred."\* They carried the short lyric to a greater perfection than it had previously attained, and some of their stanzas will live as long as piety and genius continue to influence the heart and mind of man. Who can read without a sense of their quaint sweetness Sir Walter Raleigh's lines —

## MY PILGRIMAGE.

"Give me my scallop shell of quiet,  
My staff of faith to walk upon,  
My scrip of joy (immortal diet!)  
My bottle of salvation,

---

\* Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. ii. p. 132.

My gown of glory, hope's true gage ;  
 And thus I take my pilgrimage  
 (Blood must be my body's balmer),  
 While my soul, like peaceful palmer,  
 Travelleth towards the land of heaven  
 (Other balm will not be given).  
 Over the silver mountains,  
 Where spring the nectar fountains,  
 There will I kiss  
 The bowl of bliss,  
 And drink my everlasting fill  
 Upon every milken hill ;  
 My soul will be a-dry before,  
 But after that will thirst no more."

William Habington, the author of "Castara," among many beautiful stanzas, has some peculiarly fine in his little poem,

## NIGHT TEACHETH KNOWLEDGE.

- " When I survey the bright  
 Celestial sphere,  
 So rich with jewels hung, that night  
 Doth like an Æthiop bride appear ;
- " My soul her wings doth spread,  
 And heavenward flies,  
 The Almighty mysteries to read  
 In the large volume of the skies.
- " For the bright firmament  
 Shoots out no flame  
 So silent, but is eloquent  
 In speaking the Creator's name."

In the present age, a taste has revived for the quaint sweetness of some of the lyrics of Herrick. While the heavenly strains of George Herbert are justly considered as the finest devotional poems between the time of the greatest dramatic and epic poet of our land, there is a little stanza of the sweet and fanciful Herrick that breathes true penitence for the license of some of his poems.

“ For those my unbaptized rhymes,  
 Writ in my wild unhallowed times ;  
 For every sentence, clause, and word,  
 That's not inlaid with thee, my Lord ;  
 Forgive me, God ! and blot each line,  
 Out of my book that is not thine.  
 But if 'mongst all, Thou find'st there *one*  
 Worthy thy benediction,  
 That *one* of all the rest shall be,  
 The glory of my work and me.”

Equally beautiful and true is the sentiment, that worldly honours are hinderances to the Christian life.

“ Give me honours : what are these  
 But the pleasing hinderances —  
 Stiles, and stops, and stays, that come  
 In the way 'twixt me and home?  
 Clear the walk, and then shall I  
 To my Heaven less run than fly.”

Incomparably the most spiritual and tender poet of that period was, as we said, George Herbert.

His stanzas are pervaded by a most glowing piety, and reveal a delicate loving nature. How strange it seems that the first celebrated infidel writer that England ever produced (Lord Herbert of Cherbury) should have been the brother of this Christian poet! The brothers Herbert are a curious instance of the difference of mental manifestation that may occur with a similar mode of training and education. Their mother was a most admirable woman, and trained her sons in the knowledge and practice of every Christian virtue. Nevertheless the one was a sceptic, the other a believer. Each was active in spreading his opinions,—the one suggesting doubt, the other confirming faith. It was probably owing to the excellent lessons of the mother, that Lord Herbert in the midst of his disbelief was yet a moral man; and that his gloomy creed, though it could yield no comfort either to himself or his reader, did not in his case, as it so often does, lead to corruption of life.

George Herbert was the perfect embodiment of a good pastor. Isaac Walton's biography of this admirable man contains exquisite touches, that exemplify the apostolic simplicity and piety of his character.

It is recorded in his biography, "that in one of his walks to Salisbury to join a musical society, he

saw a poor man with a poorer horse which had fallen under its load. Pulling off his canonical coat, he helped the poor man to unload, and raise the horse, and afterwards to load him again. The poor man blessed him for it, and he blessed the poor man. And so like was he to the good Samaritan, that he gave him money to refresh both himself and his horse, admonishing him also, if he loved himself to be merciful to his beast. Then coming to his musical friends at Salisbury, they began to wonder that Mr. George Herbert, who used to be always so trim and neat, should come into that company so soiled and discomposed. Yet when he told them the reason, one of them said that he had disparaged himself by so mean an employment. But the answer was, that the thought of what he had done would prove *music to him at midnight*, and that the omission of it would have made discord in his conscience whenever he should pass that place. ‘For if,’ said he, ‘I am bound to pray for all that are in distress, I am surely bound so far as is in my power to *produce* what I pray for. And though I do not wish for the like occasion every day, yet would I not willingly pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul, or showing mercy, and I praise God for this opportunity. So now let us tune our instruments.’”

An American female poet \*, of the present time, referring to this deed, beautifully says—

“The deed to humble virtue born,  
Which nursing memory taught  
To shun a boastful world’s applause,  
And love the lowly thought ;  
This builds a cell within the heart,  
Amid the blasts of care,  
And tuning high its heaven-struck harp,  
Makes midnight music there.”

There is a fulness of spiritual delight in the hallowed theme of Herbert’s sacred lays, in which the reader can scarcely fail to participate. More is implied than expressed, as if words failed him : thus he says—

“My joy, my life, my crown :  
My heart was meaning all the day  
Somewhat it fain would say ;  
And still it runneth muttering up and down,  
With only this—my joy, my life, my crown !

“Yet slight not these few words ;  
If truly said, they may take part  
Among the best in art.  
The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords  
Is when the soul unto the lines accords.”

Nothing in literary biography is more memorable than the death-bed of this Christian poet, as recorded by Isaac Walton.

\* Mrs. Sigourney.

“ In the time of his decay he was often visited and prayed for by all the clergy that lived near him, especially by his friends the bishop and prebends of the cathedral church in Salisbury ; but by none more devoutly than his wife, his three nieces (then a part of his family), and Mr. Woodnot, who were the sad witnesses of his daily decay, to whom he would often speak to this purpose : ‘ I now look back upon the pleasures of my life past, and see the content I have taken in wit, in music, and pleasant conversation, are now all past by me, like a dream, or as a shadow that returns not, and are now all become dead to me, or I to them ; and I see that as my father and generation hath done before me, so I also shall now suddenly make my bed also in the dark ; and I praise God I am prepared for it ; and I praise Him that I am not to learn patience now that I stand in such need of it ; and that I have practised mortification and endeavoured to die daily that I might not die eternally : and my hope is that I shall shortly leave this valley of tears, and be free from all fears and pain ; and which will be a more happy condition, I shall be free from sin, and all the temptations and anxieties that attend it. And this being past I shall dwell in the new Jerusalem, dwell there with men made perfect, dwell where these eyes shall see my Master and Saviour, Jesus ; and with him see my dear mother and all my relations and friends. But I must die, or not come to that happy place : and this is my content, that I am going daily towards it ; and that every day which I have lived hath taken a part of my appointed time from me, and that I shall live the less time for having lived this and the day past.’ These and the like expressions, which he uttered often, may be said to be his enjoyment of heaven, before he entered it. The Sunday before his death, he rose suddenly from his bed or couch, called for one of his instruments, took it into his hand, and said :

'My God, my God!  
 My music shall find thee,  
 And every string  
 Shall find his attribute to sing.'

And having tuned it, he played and sang —

'Oh day most calm, most bright,  
 The fruit of this—the next world's bud;  
 Th' endorsement of supreme delight,  
 Writ by a friend, and with his blood;  
 The couch of time; care's balm and stay:  
 The week were dark but for thy light;  
 Thy torch doth shew the way.

'The other days and thou  
 Make up one man; whose face thou art,  
 Knocking at heaven with thy brow:  
 The working days are the back part;  
 The burden of the week lies there,  
 Making the whole to stoop and bow,  
 'Till thy release appear.

'Man had straight forward gone  
 To endless death: but thou dost pull  
 And turn us round, to look on one  
 Whom, if we were not very dull,  
 We could not choose but look on still;  
 Since there is no place, so alone,  
 The which he doth not fill.

'Sundays the pillars are  
 On which the palace arched lies;  
 The other days fill up the spare  
 And hollow room with vanities.  
 They are the fruitful bed and borders  
 In God's rich garden; that is bare  
 Which parts their ranks and orders.



'The Sundays of man's life,  
Threaded together on Time's string,  
Make bracelets to adorn the wife\*  
Of the eternal glorious King.  
On Sunday heaven's gate stands ope;  
Blessings are plentiful and rife,  
More plentiful than hope.'

The finest occasional poem of the period in question is "The Soul's Errand." That has been given, on questionable authority, to Sir Walter Raleigh; but since claimed as the work of Joshua Sylvester, whose other poems, however, bear no comparison to this. The careful reader will observe that the peculiarity of this poem consists in its fine contrast of virtue with the opposite vices to which extremes ever tend. The recurrence of the burden "Give the world the lie," is a strong way of putting the necessity of a brave testimony to truth, as the mission or "errand" of a good man's life.

THE SOUL'S ERRAND.

"Go, soul, the body's guest,  
Upon a thankless errand!  
Fear not to touch the best,  
The truth shall be thy warrant;  
Go, since I needs must die,  
And give the world the lie.

---

\* The Church.

- “ Go, tell the court it glows  
And shines like rotten wood ;  
Go, tell the church it shows  
What's good, and doth no good :  
If church and court reply,  
Then give them both the lie.
- “ Tell potentates, they live  
Acting by others' actions,  
Not lov'd unless they give,  
Not strong but by their factions :  
If potentates reply,  
Give potentates the lie.
- “ Tell men of high condition  
That rule affairs of state,  
Their purpose is ambition,  
Their practice only hate ;  
And if they once reply,  
Then give them all the lie.
- “ Tell them that brave it most,  
They beg for more by spending,  
Who in their greatest cost,  
Seek nothing but commending ;  
And if they make reply,  
Then give them all the lie.
- “ Tell zeal it lacks devotion,  
Tell love it is but lust,  
Tell time it is but motion,  
Tell life it is but dust ;  
And wish them not reply,  
For thou must give the lie.

“ Tell age it daily wasteth,  
 Tell honour how it alters,  
 Tell beauty how she blasteth,  
 Tell favour how she falters ;  
 And as they shall reply,  
 Give every one the lie.

“ Tell wit how much it wrangles  
 In tickle points of niceness ;  
 Tell wisdom she entangles'  
 Herself in over wiseness :  
 And when they do reply,  
 Straight give them both the lie.

“ Tell physic of her boldness,  
 Tell skill it is pretension,  
 Tell charity of coldness,  
 Tell law it is contention ;  
 And as they do reply,  
 So give them still the lie.

“ Tell fortune of her blindness,  
 Tell nature of decay,  
 Tell friendship of unkindness,  
 Tell justice of delay ;  
 And if they will reply,  
 Then give them all the lie.

“ Tell arts they have no soundness,  
 But vary by esteeming ;  
 Tell schools they want profoundness,  
 And stand too much on seeming :  
 If arts and schools reply,  
 Give arts and schools the lie.

- “ Tell faith it's fled the city,  
Tell how the country erreth,  
Tell manhood shakes off pity,  
Tell virtue least preferreth \* ;  
And if they do reply,  
Spare not to give the lie.
- “ So when thou hast, as I  
Commanded thee, done blabbing ;  
Although to give the lie  
Deserves no less than stabbing ;  
Yet stab at thee who will,  
No stab the soul can kill.”

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\* Virtue leads not to preferment.

## CHAP. IX.

## SCIENCE AND ITS MARTYRS.

THE history of science is similar to that of literature, and intimately connected with it. Its records show that many ancient nations had an extensive and reverential, if not absolutely accurate, scientific knowledge. Then came the dark ages of Europe, when distorted traditions and superstitions usurped the place of truth, and effectually blinded the eyes of those who, from leisure and station, might otherwise have engaged in useful inquiries into the wonders of the world around them. The Chaldeans of old knew something of the stars, and the Arabians added to that knowledge. The art of measuring time by a sundial was known to the Hebrews in the time of Hezekiah; and, far earlier, the annual inundations of the Nile, by compelling the Egyptians to measure their land after the waters had abated, gave rise to a knowledge of geometry. This introduced the study of arithmetic, which is the foundation of all the exact sciences. Mathematics and mechanics were carefully studied, and brought to great perfection by the Greeks. The ancients

seem to have divided knowledge into three parts— arithmetic, geometry, and dialectics or language.

Since the Christian era, the Arabians were, until the tenth century, the most literary and scientific people. To them modern Europe was indebted for numerals, chemistry, and improvements in architecture and poetry. They founded numerous schools in Spain, and established the earliest libraries. Their false religious faith, however, made the Christians receive their discoveries with dread and suspicion ; and a long period of gross darkness prevailed, in which natural phenomena were regarded with mere stupid wonder by some, and with awe-stricken dread by others ; and any attempt to understand those wonders was thought an unlawful study, and any successful knowledge a proof of magical power, justly subjecting its possessor to suspicion, hatred, and persecution.

The first man in England who dared to investigate nature, and introduce those laws we term science, was Roger Bacon (born 1214). He is the most memorable instance on record of a man living before his age, and becoming the servant, not of his contemporaries, but of posterity. He was intimately acquainted with geography and astronomy, and made many valuable discoveries in optics and chemistry ; he, also, was not ignorant of the composition of gunpowder. This great

man's knowledge was so little appreciated, that it made him numerous enemies, particularly among the monks of his own fraternity, and consigned him twice to close imprisonment. For a brief period between those imprisonments, a pope (Clement IV.), more enlightened than the clergy generally, liberated him, and took him under his protection. But this patron died, and ten years of yet stricter imprisonment for Bacon followed. So little were his works and labours valued or understood, that the name of Friar Bacon has come down to modern times rather as a necromancer of the middle ages than as a scientific discoverer. It has been remarked, that in the character of his mind and writings, and in the mode of his studies, his great namesake of the sixteenth century resembled him who, more than three hundred years after, effected such changes in those pursuits of science which were at once the blessing and the bane, the joy and grief, of the life of the philosopher of the thirteenth century. It has been conjectured, and with every show of reason, that had the art of printing been discovered at the time Roger Bacon lived, such was the sluggishness of mind at that period, and the complete prevalence of superstition, that it would have been rejected with horror and smothered in its birth. Fortunately, as we have seen, that art came at a time when the clouds were rapidly breaking

away, and the morning stars of literature in the south had heralded the coming day.

The most important scientific discovery of the fourteenth century was that of the Mariner's Compass by Flavio Gioja, a Neapolitan. This instrument, in more senses than one, led the way to the maritime discoveries of the Portuguese in the fourteenth century, and the ever memorable discoveries of Columbus in the fifteenth; the latter having increased the known boundaries of the world one half, and received as his reward a life of anxiety, disappointment, and ingratitude.

The sixteenth century was not only the age of literary greatness, but science then made rapid strides. We have already adverted to Lord Bacon, but other names deserve honourable mention for their genius and their sufferings.

It was natural that the grandest of the sciences, astronomy, which had long ministered more to the ambition and credulity of mankind than to their real knowledge, should be the first to emancipate herself from the dreams of astrologers. Copernicus, Galileo, Tycho Brahe, and Kepler, were the four distinguished astronomers of the period: thus Poland, Italy, Denmark, and Germany, furnished each a philosopher destined to pave the way for a more enlightened age, and, a century later, a far more distinguished and fortunate successor in Sir Isaac Newton.



The four astronomers named experienced very bitterly the antagonism of prejudice against truth. Copernicus dreaded to publish his theory, that the sun was stationary, and the earth moved round it. The pope and all influential churchmen (and they chiefly decided on scientific matters) held a contrary belief, and to differ from them was black heresy. Copernicus died, and thus escaped the malice of his enemies, just after the publication of his theory. The storm of persecution, however, descended upon his disciple Galileo, — as great a genius as any in that age of great geniuses. It is well known that he was consigned to the dungeons of the Inquisition for saying, and *proving*, that the earth moved, and the sun stood still. Tycho Brahe, of noble birth, and remarkably discursive mind, possessing talent rather than genius, endured banishment and the confiscation of his property, as the consequence of being wiser than his peers. And patient, laborious, truthful John Kepler, lived a life of perpetual struggle with poverty and sorrow.\* These men were to astronomy what Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio were to literature,—its morning stars—“heralds of the dawn.” Modern triumphs of knowledge may, like the risen sun, obscure, and indeed hide, their beams, but the grateful memory will ever dwell upon their names with tender reverence.

\* See “Martyrs of Science,” by Sir David Brewster.

To the three divisions of knowledge by the ancients—arithmetic, geometry, and dialectics,—the moderns, taught by Lord Bacon, have added a fourth—experiment, which consolidates, confirms, and extends all the others, and constantly is adding to their range.

Chemistry, electricity, geology, hydrostatics, and pneumatics, are all the result of experiment; and it is satisfactory to know that the triumphs of our century in science are fully equal to those of the sixteenth in literature. Some think our danger now is, that, in the midst of secondary causes, we should forget the great First Cause, who, legibly as he has written his name upon his works in nature, has far more distinctly and graciously discovered himself in his Word. To know somewhat of Him, even through a glass darkly, and of our relations to Him by nature and grace, must ever be the highest knowledge. If the soul be really enlightened, the heart right, then all collateral knowledge of nature and her laws will be aids to a more devout and reverential love of Him, who is “glorious in power, fearful in praises, doing wonders.”

The Christian philosopher feels the full beauty of the fine exordium of a distinguished living poet to the various forms of matter that the mind of man has influenced.

"Be ye \* to man as angels be to God,  
 Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,  
*Suggesters to his soul of higher things*  
*Than any of your highest.* So, at last,  
 He shall look round on you, with lids too strait  
 To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well ;  
 And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,  
 And praise you when he sings his open songs,  
 For the clear song-note he has learnt in you  
 Of purifying sweetness ; and extend  
 Across your head his golden fantasies,  
 Which glorify you into soul, from sense." †

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\* Material things.

† Mrs. Barrett Browning.

## CHAP. X.

## MILTON AND HIS LITERARY CONTEMPORARIES.

THE life and writings of John Milton constitute an epoch in the literary history of his country. No other writer ever attained such a height of sublimity, and only one, Shakspeare, surpassed him in variety. No man ever more completely embodied his expressed principles in his life. Many great thinkers have failed to carry their theories into practice; but a complete harmony between the thought and deed marked Milton during the whole of his eventful career. There are, and probably ever will be, great differences of opinion as to the abstract truth of some of his sentiments on religion and politics; but no one doubts Milton's consistency with himself, his stainless integrity, and perfect sincerity. Hence our great contemplative poet Wordsworth has justly and beautifully said of him:—

“Thy soul was as a star, and dwelt apart,  
Pure as the naked heavens, unstain'd and free.”

Milton's mental history, apart from his genius, has been considered very remarkable, from the

fact of his having laid aside his favourite pursuit, poetic composition, in which he had attained high and acknowledged reputation, for political studies and controversial writings, during the most important period of England's history; and, after an interval of twenty years, returning to his first pursuit not only without any diminution, but with an accession, of power and majesty.

He is, perhaps, the only very great writer who attained to equal excellence in prose and poetry. In every kind of composition that he used he raised the English language to a dignity and grace it had never, if we except Shakspeare, reached before. His productions are so many models in their different departments. His masque of "Comus," his "Allegro" and "Penseroso," are each not only unrivalled for power of imagination, play of fancy, appropriateness of imagery, and delicious harmony of versification, but also for a delicate, unsullied purity that no other writer of that age had attained to, and none in any subsequent time has surpassed. No longer could the English language be pronounced rugged, when the tripping melody of the "Allegro," the slow harmony of the "Penseroso," and the matchless sweetness of the "Comus," were given to the world. These poems were the product of his ripe youth and early manhood. The elegy of "Lycidas" is no less beautiful, and has

a tender origin that marks the depth of Milton's affections. His young friend and fellow student, Edward King, of Christ's College, Cambridge, the son of Sir John King, secretary for Ireland, was on his way to join his father, when suddenly, in a calm sea and not far from the English coast, the vessel foundered, and all on board perished. Milton was twenty-nine, and his lamented friend twenty-five, when this calamity occurred. He commemorated his friend's death and his own affection by the exquisite poem of "Lycidas," modelled on the structure of the pastoral. He called on the shepherds and on all nature to mourn with him.

"Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more  
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude;  
 And, with forc'd fingers rude,  
 Scatter your leaves before the mellowing year:  
 Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear,  
 Compels me to disturb your season due:  
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
 Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:  
 Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew  
 Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
 He must not float upon his watery bier  
 Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,  
 Without the meed of some melodious tear.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)

To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;  
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
 Comes the blind Fury, with abhorred shears,  
 And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'  
 Phœbus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears ;  
 'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
 Nor in the glistening foil  
 Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies ;  
 But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
 And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;  
 As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
 Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Weep no more, vocal shepherds, weep no more,  
 For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor ;  
 So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore  
 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :  
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
*Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves ;*  
 Where, other groves and other streams along,  
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,  
 And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,  
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
 There entertain him all the saints above,  
 In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
 And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes."

The reader, from these brief extracts, will readily imagine the noble tribute paid by genius to affection. Milton's "melodious tears" have em-

balmed the memory of his friend to all generations. It was reserved for a poet of the present time successfully to emulate Milton in tender and sweet elegiac stanzas.\*

Like Chaucer and Surrey, Milton went to Italy, for the purpose not only of seeing ever-memorable cities, but of studying the works of poetry and art in their native home. Here the sound reached him of the troubles in his own land, the king and the parliament having come not only to a rupture but to open war. Milton left the studies and the land he loved at duty's call, and returned to render service by his mind to the sore troubled state. He did not take the sword—the pen was his implement. And while he settled down to the instruction of his nephews and a few other gentlemen's sons as his honourable pursuit, he employed his leisure from the exhausting work of instruction in aiding by his writings the cause he deemed just.

Undoubtedly his "Areopogetica," or Essay on the Liberty of the Press, is the most sustained and magnificent of all his admirable prose writings. It was addressed, be it remembered, to the republican parliament of England, then professing greatly to favour liberty, but evidently not prepared to adopt Milton's view. His opinions were far in advance of his age and party on that

\* Tennyson's "In Memoriam."



question, and it is only in comparatively recent times that the freedom of the press has been enjoyed by the people of England.

Some passages in that noble essay may well claim to have stirred the heart of England, and to have poured a full tide of aspirations for genuine liberty through her whole frame.

“I deny not but that it is of the greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men, and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors; for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them, to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve, as in a vial, the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively and vigorously productive as those fabulous dragons' teeth, and being sown up and down may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life: 'tis true no life can restore a life, whereof perhaps there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary therefore what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books, since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a kind of martyrdom;

and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and soft essence, the breath of reason itself—slays an immortality rather than a life. . . . . Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clear knowledge to be sent down among us, would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva, framed and fabricated already to our hands. Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whereas we are exhorted by the wise man to use diligence 'to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasure, early and late,' that another order should enjoin us to know nothing but by statute! When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass—though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of truth. For who knows not that truth is strong next to the Almighty? She needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power; give her but room, and do not hind her when she is asleep."

It is to be lamented that in Milton's controversial works he employed the bitter invectives and epithets which were then so generally used: It is in this respect, and this only, that he betrays any taint of the acrimony of that age. In nothing do modern writers on politics and theology contrast more favourably with their predecessors than in the absence of such railing terms against opponents, and the presence of a more courteous and dispassionate mode of advocating opinions.

His deep sense of the responsibilities of genius is shown in his "Literary Musings."

"After I had from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father, whom God recompense, been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers, both at home and at the schools; it was found that whether aught has imposed me by them that had the overlooking, or betaken to of my own choice in English, or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly the latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live. But much latelier, in the private academies of Italy, whither I was favoured to resort, perceiving that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or thereabout (for the manner is that every one must give some proof of his wit and learning there), met with acceptance above what was looked for; and other things which I had shifted, in scarcity of books and conveniences, to patch up among them, were received with written encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps. I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home: and not less to an inward prompting, which now

grew daily upon me, that by labour and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined to the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times as they should not willingly let it die. These thoughts at once possessed me, and these others, that if I were certain to write as men buy leases, for three lives and downward, there ought no regard be sooner had than to God's glory by the honour and instruction of my country. . . . . Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amator, or the trencher-fury of a rhyming parasite; nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her syren daughters; but by devout prayer to that eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loath to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them."

At the Restoration Milton's celebrated "Defence of the People of England," and his "Iconoclastes" (or the Image Breaker), the answer to the "Icon Basiliké" (or Royal Image), were publicly burnt by the common hangman; and he had to hide himself, so that he might be supposed to be dead, in order to escape the rage of the royalists.

The Act of Oblivion, following the Restoration, did not make any exception of Milton's name, and he once more, but very guardedly, ventured to appear in public. He was now called to endure some of the heaviest sorrows of which our nature is capable. He had been blind some years, having lost his sight by his great application to study. When he was composing his celebrated "Defence of the People of England" (relative to the trial and condemnation of King Charles), against the charges of Salmasius, a continental author and great royalist, his eyes began to trouble him with dimness and uncertain sight. He consulted the celebrated oculists of the time, and they assured him that, unless he laid aside all literary labour, blindness would ensue. It shows how Milton made the "Defence of the People" a matter of conscience, when he declared that he would persevere with his book whatever might be the result. Added to this affliction, his fortunes suffered with the decline of his party and the restoration of Charles II.; so that at length, when he could come out of hiding and walk abroad among his countrymen, he was both blind and poor. The flatterers of the royal party, some of them persons of brilliancy and wit, poured opprobrium on his name, and many timid friends forsook him; so that slander, malice, and ingratitude became his portion. It would be well if we could add that, when he

entered his comparatively humble dwelling, he could shut his door upon all annoyances and find in the bosom of a grateful family a soothing balm for his wounded spirit. But, alas! domestic troubles were there. His two elder daughters were not dutiful; they could not comprehend their father's lofty nature, and they disliked his studious pursuits. Ultimately, however, he did find human solace to his woes and privations in the sympathy of his estimable third wife, and of his dutiful youngest daughter — Deborah.

What vicissitudes had he known! First a tenderly nurtured child; then in youth an accomplished scholar; very early in life a celebrated poet, his fame being acknowledged even in Italy; then a political writer of eminence; subsequently Latin Secretary to Oliver the Protector; during all these changes possessing means sufficient to enable him munificently to maintain a large family, and to shelter his first wife's ungenial relatives. Then came the reverse. Death had entered his dwelling and robbed him of some of his children, of his deeply venerated father, of his dear Catherine the second wife, whom he calls his "espoused saint." Besides which, his official employment, his troops of friends, his well-earned literary honours, and patriotic reputation, that had cost him not only laborious days and nights but even his sight; these were all gone: and in their

stead came neglect, obscurity, poverty, and darkness. But "to the just shall arise light in the darkness." Milton, while he felt his sorrows as a man, bore them as a Christian; he set himself to realise the wish that had remained with him from his childhood, and which he thus expresses, "To leave something so written that my countrymen would not willingly let it die." The "Paradise Lost," the "Samson Agonistes," and the "Paradise Regained," were all written after his baptism of affliction. The life of Milton, therefore, is inseparable from his writings; they elucidate and explain each other, and are equally valuable to the student of English literature as specimens of noble thinking and acting.

Munificent prices for books were not given by publishers before there was a reading public; yet the sum Milton received for his Epic (five pounds paid down on the first edition, and the promise of three other similar payments if it succeeded) has been very justly the theme of indignant wonder with every succeeding generation. It is, however, equally a wonder that any bookseller would undertake to publish the work of a man whose former books had been publicly burned, and who was so obnoxious to the royal party. Something must be allowed for the fact that, whatever the intrinsic excellence of the book, it was possible that no one would read it except to condemn it.

In the present day, with a people tolerably com-

petent to judge of the merits of a book, it is not easy for party malice, or even legal authority, to prevent its circulation; knowledge is now so increased that wisdom can run to and fro without much chance of being successfully impeded. Then, the educated class was a restricted section of society, more under the dominion of the law of opinion than others of humbler rank; and besides, from the very majesty and sublimity of Milton's poems, they appealed to the cultivated reason as much or more than to the feelings, and, therefore, never could be favourites with the mere multitude. Hasty, superficial, thoughtless people, even in the most intellectual age, will never be the real admiring readers of Milton.

Free as Milton was, in common with every really great man, from the weakness of egotism, yet fortunately he has recorded enough of his feelings in reference to his loss of sight, to enable us to sympathise with him more completely than we could otherwise have done. His invocation to Light, at the commencement of the third book of "Paradise Lost," sublime in itself, appeals to the heart as well as the brain, in consequence of his blindness.

"Hail, holy Light! offspring of Heav'n first born,  
Or of the Eternal coeternal beam  
May I express thee unblam'd? since God is light,  
And never but in unapproach'd light



Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,  
 Bright effluence of bright essence increate.  
 Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream  
 Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,  
 Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice  
 Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest  
 The rising world of waters dark and deep,  
 Won from the void and formless infinite.  
 Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,  
 Escap'd the Stygian pool, though long detain'd  
 In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight  
 Through utter and through middle darkness borne,  
 With other notes than to the Orphean lyre  
 I sung of Chaos and eternal Night;  
 Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down  
 The dark descent, and up to reascend,  
 Though hard and rare: Thee I revisit safe,  
 And feel thy sov'reign vital lamp; but thou  
 Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain  
 To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;  
 So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,  
 Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more  
 Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt  
 Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,  
 Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief  
 Thee, Sion, and thy flowery brooks beneath,  
 That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,  
 Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget  
 Those other two equall'd with me in fate,  
 So were I equall'd with them in renown,  
 Blind Thamyras, and blind Mæonides,  
 And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old:  
 Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move  
 Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird  
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest covert hid

Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year  
 Seasons return ; but not to me returns  
 Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,  
 Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
 Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine ;  
 But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
 Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men  
 Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair  
 Presented with an universal blank  
 Of nature's works to me expunged and ras'd,  
 And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.  
 So much the rather thou, celestial Light,  
 Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers  
 Irradiate ; there plant eyes, all mist from thence  
 Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell  
 Of things invisible to mortal sight."

Gloriously was this last aspiration fulfilled! It has been finely said, Milton is never more himself than when speaking of himself. We like, therefore, to trace his course of thought in reference to this calamity.

MILTON'S SONNET ON HIS BLINDNESS.

"When I consider how my light is spent  
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
 And that one talent which is death to hide,  
 Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent  
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
 My true account, lest He, returning, chide ;  
 'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ?'  
 I fondly ask : but Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need  
 Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best: his state  
 Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
 They also serve who only stand and wait.'

In "Samson Agonistes" the same personal deprivation is made the matter of a bitter and piteous lamentation in the character of Samson.

"But chief of all,  
 O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!  
 Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,  
 Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!  
 Light, the prime work of God, to me is extinct,  
 And all her various objects of delight  
 Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,  
 Inferior to the vilest now become  
 Of man or worm; the vilest here excel me;  
 They creep, yet see; I, dark in light, expos'd  
 To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,  
 Within doors, or without, still as a fool,  
 In power of others, never in my own;  
 Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.  
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
 Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse  
 Without all hope of day!  
 O first created Beam, and thou great Word,  
 'Let there be light,' and light was over all;  
 Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree?  
 The sun to me is dark  
 And silent as the moon,  
 When she deserts the night,  
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

Since light so necessary is to life,  
 And almost life itself, if it be true  
 That light is in the soul,  
 She all in every part; why was the sight  
 To such a tender ball as the eye confin'd,  
 So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?  
 And not, as feeling, through all parts diffus'd,  
 That she might look at will through every pore?  
 Then had I not been thus exil'd from light,  
 As in the land of darkness, yet in light,  
 To live a life half dead, a living death,  
 And buried; but, O yet more miserable!  
 Myself my sepulchre, my moving grave;  
 Buried, yet not exempt,  
 By privilege of death and burial,  
 From worst of other evils, pains and wrongs;  
 But made hereby obnoxious more  
 To all the miseries of life,  
 Life in captivity  
 Among inhuman foes."

Recently another short poem on his blindness  
 has been discovered, less sublime, but more inti-  
 mately affecting.

ON HIS LOSS OF SIGHT.\*

"I am old and blind!  
 Men point at me as smitten by God's frown;  
 Afflicted and deserted of my kind;  
 Yet I am not cast down.

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\* This sublime and affecting production was but lately discovered among the remains of our great epic poet, and

“ I am weak, yet strong ;  
 I murmur not that I no longer see ;  
 Poor, old, and helpless, I the more belong,  
 Father Supreme ! to thee.

“ O merciful one !  
 When men are farthest, then thou art most near ;  
 When friends pass by, my weakness shun,  
 Thy chariot I hear.

“ Thy glorious face  
 Is leaning towards me ; and its holy light  
 Shines in upon my lonely dwelling-place—  
 And there is no more night.

“ On my bended knee  
 I recognise thy purpose, clearly shown :  
 My vision thou hast dimm'd that I may see  
 Thyself—thyself alone.

“ I have nought to fear ;  
 This darkness is the shadow of thy wing ;  
 Beneath it I am almost sacred, here  
 Can come no evil thing.

“ Oh ! I seem to stand  
 Trembling, where foot of mortal ne'er hath been,  
 Wrapp'd in the radiance of thy sinless land,  
 Which eye hath never seen.

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is published in the recent Oxford edition of “Milton's Works.” But there is a modern smoothness in this poem that suggests a doubt of its authenticity.



“Visions come and go ;  
Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng ;  
From angel lips I seem to hear the flow  
Of soft and holy song.

“It is nothing now,  
When heaven is opening on my sightless eyes—  
When airs from Paradise refresh my brow,  
The earth in darkness lies.

“In a purer clime  
My being fills with rapture—waves of thought  
Roll in upon my spirit—strains sublime  
Break over me unsought.

“Give me now my lyre !  
I feel the stirrings of a gift divine,  
Within my bosom glows unearthly fire,  
Lit by no skill of mine.”

The literary influence of the Bible was never more manifest in any writer or poet than Milton. He had wandered through the regions of ancient classic story, knew their riches, thoroughly valued them at their full worth, perhaps (to judge by the frequency with which he quotes from classic literature and personages) beyond their merits. But when he wanted a theme for a poem to be bequeathed as an imperishable legacy to his country, he goes not to human, but divine sources for inspiration. Milton describes himself in the invocation to *Light* as “*smit with the love of sacred song ;*”

and hence the fall of man, and his restoration—  
 Bible truths! The grand themes of its records  
 and prophecies, form the subjects of the two com-  
 panion poems on which Milton's fame popularly  
 rests. The "Samson Agonistes" is another  
 Bible narrative, grand and terrible rather than  
 interesting or affecting. The story of Samson  
 in the sacred page supplies the valuable lesson,  
 that no external gifts and endowments can com-  
 pensate for the absence of a prudent well-balanced  
 mind. The blessing of a gift depends on our  
 wisdom in using it. Samson had strength, but  
 not wisdom. He fulfilled his mission as an in-  
 strument of divine vengeance on the Philistines,  
 but left us a warning rather than an example.  
 Milton delineates with awful distinctness the suf-  
 ferings and humiliation of Israel's champion; his  
 rage and anguish, both fierce and undisciplined;  
 and his final death-triumph, when, his past  
 strength returning, he bowed the strong pillars  
 of the Philistine temple like reeds, and brought  
 down the massive structure on his mocking foes,  
 sharing himself in the death he dealt to thousands.

The "Paradise Regained" was suggested to  
 Milton by Thomas Ellwood the Quaker, who was  
 his friend, and had been wont to read Latin with  
 and for him. He had read Milton's deathless  
 epic; and while he "modestly and freely" com-  
 mended it, he said to the blind poet, "Thou hast

said much here of paradise lost, but what hast thou to say of paradise found?" Milton made no reply then, but at a later period he showed him the "Paradise Regained," saying, "This is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont\*, which before I had not thought of."

The secular literature of all the peoples of earth, ancient or modern, does not furnish more than four or five epic poems that will at all bear comparison with Milton's. Homer's "Iliad," Virgil's "Æneid," Dante's "Divina Commedia," Tasso's "Jerusalem," and Camoens's "Lusiad," are among the gems that on the finger of Time glisten for ever. Competent critics, however, have assigned the meed of highest praise to Milton.

Notwithstanding the disfavour in which the great poet was held, and contrary to the expectation of his timid publisher, his great poem was appreciated by those whose praise was fame, men of opposite opinions to Milton, and whose approbation was compelled by the force of his genius. Sir John Denham, himself a poet, and a courtier also, entered the House of Commons with a proof sheet of the "Paradise Lost," wet from the press, and said, "This is part of the noblest poem that

\* Chalfont, St. Giles, Bucks, where Milton lived in a pleasant cottage, procured by Ellwood, during the prevalence of the plague in London.



ever was written in any language or in any age.”\*  
 John Dryden, the first critic, and, except Milton, the greatest poet of the time, said quaintly, “ This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too.”

Subsequently he recorded his praise in verse.

“ Three poets in three different ages born,  
 Greece, Italy, and England did adorn :  
 The first in loftiness of thought surpassed ;  
 The next in Majesty ; in both the last.  
 The force of nature could no farther go ;  
 To make a third she joined the other two.”

The universal voice of posterity has fully confirmed that praise. And though party malice for a time shrouded the lustre of his name, and some biographies, particularly that by Dr. Johnson, were calculated to give a false view of John Milton as a man and a Christian, and were scarcely just to him as a poet, yet these mists and glooms have now cleared away, and we behold the great poet shining as one of the brightest constellations in the resplendent heaven of genius.

Milton was so beyond our common humanity in his genius and his virtues, that his misfortunes seem essential to connect him with us, and to prevent our sympathy entirely merging in wonder and admiration. The poet is a seraph belonging

\* Richardson is the authority for this: it has been doubted by modern biographers.



to another sphere. Old, poor, and blind, he is a man, and our hearts throb out in love and reverence towards him.

The age of Milton, like that of his predecessor Shakspeare, was prolific in great men. There was, however, far less originality than in the preceding time. Talent rather than genius was the characteristic of the period.

Milton's immediate friend, the noble Andrew Marvell, deserves an honoured remembrance, not only because he was Milton's friend, but because he was a fine writer and a good man; incorruptible in a venal age. The anecdote of Lord Danby seeking him out in his obscure lodging, and offering him royal patronage and an immediate sum of money, as evidence of the king's sincere admiration of him, and Marvell wittily but firmly refusing the offer, saying his dinner was provided, will endear his name to all lovers of true disinterested patriotism as long as public virtue wakes a responsive throb in the human heart.

Marvell enjoyed a high reputation in his own time. But it seems strange to modern readers, that his noble commendatory lines prefixed to Milton's epic should have been necessary to aid the book in obtaining the suffrage of the public; for, it is evident, his prefatory poem, and Dr. Barrow's Latin exordium, were both judged necessary by the timid publisher to propitiate suc-

cess. Posterity feel that those great men received rather than conferred honour by their names being prefixed to Milton's work.

Marvell was chiefly a satirist \*: his most powerful writings both in prose and verse were sarcasms on the vices of the age, a fruitful theme; and he spared neither king, prelates, peers, nor commons when they merited censure. His works, referring rather to the passing events than to general topics, are now read more by the curious in the rise and progress of English satire, than by the general public. His "Naked Truth," and "Mr. Smirke, or the Divine in Mode," are pungent not more for their severity than their truth.

Marvell was to the puritans and liberals of those times what Butler was to the royalists; as much, however, transcending Butler in a noble grateful heart, as it must be confessed Marvell was excelled by Butler in clearness, terseness, epigrammatic point, and brilliancy. The easy flow, the matchless rhymes, the distinct sharp point of Butler's verse, have made his poem "Hudibras" admired even by those who disliked his principles and were shocked at his indecency.

At the town of Newport Pagnell there is an

\* Bishop Hall, so well known and esteemed for his religious writings, is the first eminent English satirist,—condemning the follies of his own times in racy verse.

old house, yet standing, where tradition says Sir Samuel Luke resided, a puritan in religion and a republican in politics. During the protectorate, when Butler's opinions might have subjected him to annoyance, or it may be to persecution (for men of every party were then inclined to severity), Sir Samuel Luke took the poet to his house, where he resided twelve years in safe shelter and studious ease. Whether he was a guest, or held the office of tutor in the family, is not certainly known, but it is an unquestioned fact that after the Restoration Butler held up his patron and protector to universal ridicule as "Hudibras." He cleverly caricatured not only Sir Samuel Luke, but the religious opinions held by some of the wisest divines, and certainly by one of the greatest poets of that or any age; and poured contempt upon men whose patriotism has never been questioned even by those who differed from them. His poem so abounded in wit and genius that it served the royal party more than any work of that age; it was read and quoted by king and courtiers, and all who loved to have a laugh at the expense of religion and decorum. And some of its pungent couplets have become incorporated with our language, for the truths they certainly contain: fine gems whatever the setting! But though thus popular, the arrows of his wit supplying the empty quivers of many a fopling

courtier, Butler was doomed to suffer from ingratitude. He was amused and wearied with false promises of permanent assistance, consigned to neglect, died in an obscure lodging nearly destitute, the expenses of his funeral being paid by a friend. Among the number of

“Mighty poets in their misery dead,”

Butler's name stands prominent. If we are to judge of the party he aided by the way they treated him, we should be constrained to say the sorrowful death of Butler was more condemnatory of them and their heartlessness, than all the volumes of their enemies.

Our English literature is peculiarly rich in satire. The first eminent satirist was good Bishop Hall, Marvell and Butler followed. Dryden, who tried and succeeded in nearly all kinds of composition, was peculiarly happy and forcible in satire. But his name must be reserved until we come to speak of the rise of criticism in our land.

The age of Milton was also that of many great divines, among whom Chillingworth, Barrow, Tillotson, Sherlock, Owen, and Baxter, are deservedly celebrated for purity of life, great learning, and, notwithstanding their great differences of opinion, the service their writings rendered to the cause of piety. Baxter, among innumerable excellences

of life and writings, was greatly in advance of his age in liberality to those who differed from him. Of theological controversies he says, —

“ My mind being these many years immersed in studies of this nature, and having also long wearied myself in searching what fathers and schoolmen have said of such things before us, and my genius abhorring confusion and equivocal, I came, by many years longer study, to perceive that most of the doctrinal controversies among Protestants are far more about equivocal words than matter; and it wounded my soul to perceive what work both tyrannical and unskilful disputing clergymen had made these thirteen hundred years in the world! Experience, since the year 1643 till this year, 1675, hath loudly called me to repent of my own prejudices, sidings, and censurings of causes and persons not understood, and of all the miscarriages of my ministry and life that have been thereby caused; and to make it my chief work to call men that are within my hearing to more peaceable thoughts, affections, and practices. And my endeavours have not been in vain, in that the ministers of the county where I lived were very many of such a peaceable temper, and a great number more through the land, by God's grace (rather than any endeavours of mine), are so minded. But the sons of the cowl were exasperated the more against me, and accounted him to be against every man that called all men to love and peace, and was for no man as in a contrary way.”

There were also several historical writers contemporary with Milton, the most memorable, perhaps, being the celebrated loyalist and distinguished lawyer Lord Clarendon: many of his sketches of the celebrated men of his own time

are so life-like and truthful, that they can never be superseded. All subsequent historians have taken his testimony, where it was not too much influenced by his manifest, and indeed avowed, prejudices.

Bulstrode Whitelocke was of opposite principles to Lord Clarendon. He wrote "Memorials of English Affairs" from the accession of Charles I. to the Restoration. He was the legal adviser of the patriot John Hampden, and a strong opponent to persecution for religious opinions.

Bishop Burnet, though somewhat later, may be classed within this period. His "History of his own Time," though much controverted by those who held different political principles to himself, will always be read with interest for the clearness of the narrative and the vividness of the pictures.

But, next to Milton, incomparably the greatest imaginative writer in that age was John Bunyan. The life of this truly great man is well known. Born in the poorest ranks, — without education, — earning his living by one of the lowest occupations, that of a tinker, — nature and grace more than compensated to him for the malice of fortune. After a riotous youth, we find him (in some measure through the instrumentality of a pious wife) brought to a knowledge of the highest truth — Gospel truth. His gifts of thought and speech, though modestly undervalued by himself, attracted

attention among religious friends. They entreated and laid it upon his conscience, that he should exercise those gifts by teaching to others the spiritual truths he had so fully learned. He yielded; found his words blessed by evidences of usefulness. This confirmed him a minister. He had his credentials ratified: "seals had been given to his ministry, and souls to his hire." But, in the licentious time of the Restoration, when floods of profligacy poured over the land, and persecution arose with added strength, Bunyan was one of the first, if not the very first, to suffer for conscience' sake. He was consigned to Bedford jail twelve years, and there wrote the marvellous allegory that has chiefly endeared his memory to posterity.

Bunyan may be said to have been to the masses what Milton was to the educated. His book, long neglected, if not despised, by the great and noble, found immediate favour with the people.

There had been skilful allegories in the English language before Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." Stephen Hawes, at a very early period, wrote his "Pastime of Pleasure," in which science, and abstract virtues and qualities, are allegorised in a style rude but quaint and graphic. Then came Spenser's glorious "Faerie Queen," a radiant web of beauty. But Bunyan had not read these: his library contained the Bible and



Fox's "Book of Martyrs" only; though certainly resemblances of thought to the "Faerie Queen" are sometimes so apparent as to be very striking. Spenser's tangled wood of error, into which the perplexed knight strays, and Bunyan's "slough of despond," are sufficiently similar, as hindrances in the outset to Knight and Pilgrim, as to excite surprise at the coincidence.

There is, however, this superiority in the allegory of the great prose poet, that it has a human interest very different from the abstractions and mystic idealities of Spenser's luxuriant poem. Few, even among educated people, are able to read the "Faerie Queen" through, without weariness, spite of its exquisite passages and descriptions; while, in Bunyan's matchless allegory, all, from the child to the hoary-headed sage, agree that the interest of the narrative alone, keeps alive the attention from the first to the last page of the "Pilgrim." Its characters, its scenes, are never forgotten; they are constantly recurring as expressive of individual experience, or descriptive of persons and instances often met with in society. All is real and true.

The spiritual value, the hidden beauty folded up in that admirable work, are beyond praise. Next to the Bible, it has exercised the most widespread influence, reaching sections of society to whom books were scarcely ever addressed, and

directing the attention of readers to God, to eternity, to their state by nature as sinners, and their state by grace as the redeemed of the Saviour. The literary and spiritual influence combined of the Bible was never more powerfully shown than in the production of this truly original book. The fame of its author has gone on increasing with every succeeding generation. In our own time, poets, scholars, critics, and historians, have vied with each other in eulogising it; and their commendations have made the book as much sought after by the great and noble, as it has been cherished from the first by the poor and lowly. Of no other book in the English language can it be said, that it equally pleases and instructs the young and old, the rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant.

## CHAP. XI

## FEMALE WRITERS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

IT is a question that will arise in the mind of every thoughtful reader — what were the mental characteristics of the women of the time of Milton? Never, perhaps, in any age, did the extremes of virtue and vice exist in greater contrast than at this period. Unblushing profligacy in the court, and the general frivolity of fashionable manners, destroyed the lovely feminine attraction of modesty in many high-born women of the time.

Yet there were noble exceptions to the general laxity of manners and morals. Two of the most beautiful biographies ever penned by female writers belong to this period. It adds to the value of these works that they were composed by ladies who were closely connected with the leading men of the two opposite parties, royalist and republican, — Lady Fanshawe, the wife of Sir Richard Fanshawe the eminent royalist, and Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson, the wife of Colonel Hutchinson the republican governor of Nottingham Castle during the civil wars. Each of these ladies wrote the life and experiences of her husband; each saw the same

events from different points of view ; each supplies a sort of domestic commentary on the public affairs of the time. It is curious to observe that the same motive influenced both in writing the memoirs in question. Each desired to present to her son a picture of a lost father's worth, and a model of the Christian gentleman, for imitation. Each was equally admirable in all feminine attributes of loyalty, sweetness, affection, discretion, and what some one has called "the glorious faculty of self help."

Unaffected fervent piety was equally their characteristic, though they were of different creeds and modes of faith, as to external worship. But truly spiritual Christians are all of one church ; and though in this world, by reason of seeing "through a glass darkly," they differ on minor points, they all will meet in that land where every mist and obscurity shall be dispelled by the glorious rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

Their qualifications for the work of authorship were about equal. Mrs. Hutchinson had the better education, and the more philosophical mind ; Lady Fanshawe a more unstudied grace, and quaint *naïve* simplicity.

Both were sufferers in the commotions of the time, and by the changes and reverses that befell their husbands ; and though both were necessarily political partizans, they were so through the in-

fluence of their affections, and in obedience to their relative duties. There is something instructive to all in the fine portrait of her husband's virtues given by Mrs. Hutchinson.

“To number his virtues is to give the epitome of his life, which was nothing else but a progress from one degree of virtue to another, till in a short time he arrived to that height which many longer lives could never reach; and had I but the power of rightly disposing and relating them, his single example would be more instructive than all the rules of the best moralists; for his practice was of a more divine extraction drawn from the word of God, and wrought up by the assistance of His Spirit; therefore in the head of all his virtues I shall set that which was the head and spring of them all, his Christianity—for this alone is the true royal blood that runs through all the body of virtue.

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“By Christianity I intend that universal habit of grace which is wrought in a soul by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby the whole creature is resigned up into the divine will and love, and all its actions directed to the obedience and glory of its Maker.

“He hated persecution for religion, and was always a champion for all religious people against their great oppressors. He detested all scoffs at worship, though such a one as he was not persuaded of it. Whatever he practised in religion was neither for faction nor advantage, but contrary to it and purely for conscience sake. He had rather a firm impression than a great memory; yet he was forgetful of nothing but injuries. His own integrity made him credulous of other men's till reason and experience convinced him. He was as ready to hear as to give counsel, and never pertinacious in his will when his reason was convinced.

“In matters of faith his reason always submitted to the word of God, and what he could not comprehend he would believe because it was written : in all other things the greatest names in the world could never lead him without reason. He very well understood his own advantages, natural parts, gifts, and acquirements, yet so as neither to glory of them to others, nor overvalue himself for them; for he had an excellent virtuous modesty, which shut out all vanity of mind, and yet admitted the true understanding of himself, which was requisite for the best improvement of all his talents.

“He contemned none that were not wicked in whatever low degree of nature or fortune they were otherwise : wherever he saw wisdom, learning, or other virtues in men, he honoured them highly, and admired them to their full rate, but never gave himself blindly up to the conduct of the greatest master. Love itself, which was as powerful in his as in any soul, rather quickened than blinded the eyes of his judgment in discerning the imperfections of those that were most dear to him. His soul ever reigned as king in the internal throne, and never was captive to his sense.

\* \* \* \* \*

“If he were defective in any part of justice, it was when it was in his power to punish those who had injured him ; whom I have so often known him to recompense with favours instead of revenge, that his friends used to tell him, if they had any occasion to make him favourably partial to them, they would provoke him by an injury. He that was as a rock to all assaults of might and violence, was the gentlest, easiest soul to kindness, of which the least warm spark melted him into any thing that was not sinful. There never was a man more exactly just in the performance of all duties to all relations and persons.

\* \* \* \* \*

“For conjugal affection to his wife, it was such in him,

as whosoever could draw out a rule of honour, kindness, and religion to be practised in that estate, need no more but exactly draw out his example. Never had man a greater passion for a woman, and a more just esteem of a wife, yet he was not uxorious, nor remitted he that just rule which it was her honour to obey, but managed the reins of government with such prudence and affection, that she who would not delight in such an honourable and advantageable subjection must have wanted a reasonable soul. He governed by persuasion, which he never employed but to things honourable and profitable for herself. He loved her soul and her honour more than her outside. If he esteemed her at a higher rate than she in herself could have deserved, he was the author of that virtue he doated on, while she only reflected his own glories upon him: all that she was, was *him*, while he was here; and all that she is now is at best but his pale shade.

“He was so truly magnanimous, that prosperity could never lift him up in the least, nor give him any tincture of vain glory, nor diminish a general affability, courtesy, and civility, that he always showed to all persons. When he was most exalted, he was most merciful and compassionate to those that were humbled. At the same time that he vanquished any enemy, he cast away all his ill-will to him, and entertained thoughts of love and kindness as soon as he ceased to be in a posture of opposition. He was as far from meanness as from pride, as truly generous as humble, and showed his noble spirit more in his adversity than in his prosperous condition: he vanquished all the spite of his enemies by his manly suffering, and all the contempts they could cast at him were their shame, not his.”

This extract, abridged as it is, we may regard as the noblest monument the true-hearted wife

could rear to her husband. No brass or marble could so keep his memory and her affection alive to all generations as these glowing and thoughtful passages.

The comprehensive brevity of her style is well shown in the following eulogy on England, her laws, and people.

“Better laws and a happier constitution of government no nation ever enjoyed, it being a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, with sufficient fences against the pest of every one of those forms,—tyranny, faction, and confusion. Yet it is not possible for man to devise such just and excellent bounds, as will keep in wild ambition when prince's flatterers encourage that beast to break his fence, which it hath often done with miserable consequences both to the prince and people; but could never in any age so tread down popular liberty but that it arose again with renewed vigour, till at length it trod on those that trampled it before. And in the just bounds wherein our kings were so well hedged in, the surrounding princes have with terror seen the reproof of their usurpations over their free brethren, whom they rule rather as slaves than subjects, and are only served for fear, but not for love; whereas this people have ever been as affectionate to good, as unpliant to bad sovereigns. Nor is it only valour and generosity that renown this nation; in arts we have advanced equal to our neighbours, and in those that are most excellent, exceeded them. The world hath not yielded men more famous in navigation, nor ships better built or furnished. Agriculture is as ingeniously practised. The English archers were the terror of Christendom, and their clothes the ornament. But these low things bounded not their great spirits; in all ages it hath yielded men as famous in all kinds of learning



as Greece or Italy can boast of. And to complete the crown of all their glory reflected from the lustre of their ingenuity, valour, wit, learning, justice, wealth, and bounty, their piety and devotion to God and his worship hath made them one of the most truly noble nations in the Christian world; God having, as it were, enclosed a people here out of the waste common of the world, to serve him with a pure and undefiled worship. Lucius, the British king, was one of the first monarchs of the earth that received the faith of Christ into his heart and kingdom; Henry the Eighth, the first prince that broke the antichristian yoke off from his own and his subjects' necks. Here it was that the first Christian emperor received his crown; here began the early dawn of gospel light by Wickliffe and other faithful witnesses, whom God raised up after the black and horrid midnight of antichristianism. And a more plentiful harvest of devout confessors, constant martyrs, and holy worshippers of God, hath not grown in any field of the church throughout all ages, than those whom God hath here glorified his name and gospel by; yet hath not this wheat been without its tares. God, in comparison with other countries, hath made this as a paradise, so, to complete the parallel, the serpent hath in all times been busy to seduce, and not unsuccessful, ever stirring up opposers to the infant truths of Christ. \* \* \* \* \*

“When the dawn of the gospel began to break upon this isle after the dark midnight of papacy, the morning was more cloudy here than in other places, by reason of the state interest which was mixing and working itself into the interest of religion, and which in the end quite wrought it out. King Henry the Eighth, who by his royal authority cast out the Pope, did not intend the people of the land should have any ease of oppression, but only changed their foreign yoke for home-bred fetters, dividing the pope's spoils between himself and his bishops, who cared not for

their father at Rome so long as they enjoyed their patrimony and their honours here under another head ; so that I cannot subscribe to those who entitle that king to the honour of the Reformation. But even then there wanted not many who discerned the corruptions that were retained in the church, and eagerly applied their endeavours to obtain a purer reformation ; against whom, those who saw no need of further reformation, either through excess of joy for that which was already brought forth, or else, through a secret love of superstition rooted in their hearts, thought this too much—were bitterly incensed, and hating that light which reprov'd their darkness, everywhere stirred up spirits of envy and persecution against them. Upon the great revolution which took place at the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the crown, the nation became divided into three great factions, the papists, the state protestants, and the more religious zealots, who afterwards were branded with the name of puritans. In vain it was for these to address the queen and the parliament, for the bishops, under the specious pretences of uniformity and obedience, procured severe punishments to be inflicted on such as durst gainsay their determinations in all things concerning worship, whereupon some, even in those godly days, lost their lives."

Though Colonel Hutchinson had fought for the republic, he disliked the turn affairs took when Cromwell was raised to the supreme power, and, true to the principles of integrity lauded by his wife, he refused office during the Protectorate, and retired to his country house, lived in the intellectual companionship he loved, until the Restoration, when the share he had taken in the condemnation of King Charles exposed him to

danger. He was imprisoned in an unwholesome place (Deal Castle), and there died, leaving his noble wife to embalm his name in one of the most admirable biographies of that or any age.

Lady Fanshawe was truly a womanly woman. Incidentally, as matters of course, she relates some instances of her devoted love to her husband that are full of the most tender and genuine heroism. Sir Richard, like many royalists, had perilled his life and impoverished his family in the service of the King. During the Protectorate he was taken prisoner after the battle of Worcester, and in dread of death was confined in a small room at Whitehall. Lady Fanshawe in great distress came to London, and thus describes her trials:—

“ During the time of his imprisonment\* I failed not constantly to go, when the clock struck four in the morning, with a dark lantern in my hand, all alone and on foot, from my lodging in Chancery Lane at my cousin Young’s, to Whitehall, in at the entry that went out of King Street into the Bowling Green. There I would go under his window and softly call him. He, after the first time expected, never failed to put out his head at the first call. Thus we talked together, and sometimes I was so wet with rain that it went in at my neck and out at my heels. He directed me how I should make my addresses, which I did

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\* The battle of Worcester was fought the 3rd of September; consequently, as some time had elapsed before the prisoners came to London, it must have been the depth of winter.


ever to their General—Cromwell, who had a great respect for him, and would have bought him off to his service upon any terms.”

Through her exertions Sir Richard was bailed ; though Sir Harry Vane and many influential advisers of Cromwell were opposed to his release.

The account she gives of herself and her education are interesting, as a picture of the training of a young lady in the seventeenth century.

“Now it is necessary for me to say something of my mother’s education of me, which was with all the advantages that time afforded ; both for working all sorts of fine works with my needle, and learning French, singing, lute, the virginals, and dancing ; and notwithstanding I learned as well as most did, yet was I wild to that degree, that the hours of my beloved recreation took up too much of my time, for I loved riding in the first place, running, and all active pastimes ; in short, I was that which we graver people call a hoyting girl ; but to be just to myself, I never did mischief to myself or other people, nor one immodest word or action in my life, though skipping and activity was my delight. But upon my mother’s death I then began to reflect, and, as an offering to her memory, I flung away those little childishnesses that had formerly possessed me, and by my father’s command took upon me charges of his house and family, which I so ordered by my excellent mother’s example as found acceptance in his sight.”

Lady Fanshawe’s advice to her son is worthy of being studied by all young persons for its sound practical wisdom.



“Endeavour to be innocent as a dove, but as wise as a serpent; and let this lesson direct you most in the greatest extremes of fortune. Hate idleness, and curb all passions. Be true in all words and actions. Unnecessarily deliver not your opinion; but when you do, let it be just, well considered, and plain. Be charitable in all thought, word, and deed, and ever ready to forgive injuries done to yourself, and be more pleased to do good than to receive good.

“Be civil and obliging to all, dutiful where God and nature command you; but friend to one, and that friendship keep sacred, as the greatest tie upon earth, and be sure to ground it upon virtue, for no other is either happy or lasting.

“Endeavour always to be content in that estate of life which it hath pleased God to call you to, and think it a great fault not to employ your time either for the good of your soul, or improvement of your understanding, health, or estate; and as these are the most pleasant pastimes, so it will make you a cheerful old age, which is as necessary for you to design, as to make provision to support the infirmities which decay of strength brings; and as it was never seen that a vicious youth terminated in a contented, cheerful old age, but perished out of countenance. Ever keep the best qualified persons company, out of whom you will find advantage, and reserve some hours daily to examine yourself and fortune; for if you embark yourself in perpetual conversation or recreation, you will certainly shipwreck your mind and fortune. Remember the proverb, ‘Such as your company is such is the man,’ and have glorious actions before your eyes, and think what shall be your portion in heaven as well as what you desire on earth.”

The life of this admirable woman was full of trials; travels by sea and land, sickness, loss of children, and public responsibilities. On the

Restoration her husband was ambassador to Spain, and died in Madrid soon after he entered on his embassy, leaving his wife in straitened circumstances, with four young daughters and one infant son to maintain and educate. For that son she wrote her husband's memoirs. The King, whose cause had been so warmly espoused by both husband and wife, to the sacrifice of fortune, comfort, and safety, neglected the widow and orphans of his faithful servant; and she never obtained any kind of payment or compensation for her losses.

It is significant of the period we are now considering, that these two excellent books should have both continued in manuscript. The prejudice against female authorship must have been one reason for so long withholding them from the public. Except the beautiful biographies of quaint old Isaac Walton, there was at the time they were written nothing in the way of memoirs superior to them. The publication of both books has been recent; that of Mrs. Hutchinson's in 1806, and Lady Fanshawe's so recently as 1830.

The female poets of that age were not numerous. The most voluminous was Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. It was the fashion of Charles and his court to laugh at her productions, and call her "the mad Duchess of Newcastle." Laughter, being contagious, easy, and pleasant, it

is scarcely wonderful that many have joined in it who know nothing of the Duchess of Newcastle but her name.

She was a fervent royalist, the daughter of Sir Charles Lucas of Colchester, and her husband the Duke was as loyal as herself. They suffered in common with their party, and endured many years of exile, which the Duchess beguiled with literary pursuits, writing chiefly to amuse her husband, whom she lauded in such high-flown strains that it provoked the sneers of the wicked wits of Charles's profligate court. A wife devoted to her husband, and glorying to avow it, was a novelty in that corrupt circle, and reflected by contrast too powerfully on the coldness and levity of the ladies of that court. Even in this day of female authorship few, if any, can compare in the extent of their labours with the Duchess, who wrote twelve folio volumes of plays, poems, orations, philosophical discourses, &c. In judgment and taste she was very deficient, but possessed fancy, invention, and industry. Some of her fantasies are elegantly expressed.

#### OF THE THEME OF LOVE.

“O, love, how thou art tired out with rhyme !  
 Thou art a tree whereon all poets climb ;  
 And from the branches every one takes some  
 Of thy sweet fruit, which Fancy feeds upon.

But now thy tree is left so bare and poor,  
That they can hardly gather one plum more."

THE FUNERAL OF CALAMITY.

"Calamity was laid on Sorrow's hearse,  
And covering had of melancholy verse;  
Compassion, a kind friend, did mourning go,  
And tears about the corpse, as flowers, strow;  
A garland of deep sighs by Pity made,  
Upon Calamity's sad corpse was laid;  
Bells of Complaint did ring it to the grave;  
Poets a monument of Fame it gave."

"The Pastime and Recreation of the Queen of the Fairies in Fairy Land" is her most admired poem. The following lines, describing the adornments of the Fairy Queen, are very poetic.

"She on a dewy leaf doth bathe,  
And as she sits the leaf doth wave;  
There like a new-fallen flake of snow,  
Doth her white limbs in beauty show.  
Her garments fair her maids put on,  
Made of the pure light of the sun."

Mrs. Catherine Philips, who died in her thirty-third year, was an ornament of this age. Dryden and Cowley praised her genius, and Jeremy Taylor, the "Milton of Divines," addressed to her his "Discourse on Friendship." The following poem sufficiently attests the grace and sweetness of her style.



A COUNTRY LIFE.

“ How sacred and how innocent  
A country life appears !  
How free from tumult, discontent,  
From flattery, or fears !

“ This was the first and happiest life,  
When man enjoy'd himself ;  
Till pride exchanged peace for strife,  
And happiness for pelf.

“ 'Twas here the poets were inspir'd,  
Here taught the multitude ;  
The brave they here with honour fir'd,  
And civiliz'd the rude.

“ That golden age did entertain  
No passion but of love ;  
The thoughts of ruling and of gain  
Did ne'er their fancies move.

“ Them that do covet only rest,  
A cottage will suffice ;  
It is not brave to be possess'd  
Of earth ; but to despise.

“ Opinion is the rate of things,  
From hence our peace doth flow ;  
I have a better fate than kings,  
Because I think it so.

“ When all the stormy world doth roar,  
How unconcern'd am I !  
I cannot fear to tumble lower,  
Who never could be high.

“ Secure in these unenvied walls  
 I think not on the state,  
 And pity no man's case that falls  
 From his ambitious height.

“ Silence and innocence are safe;  
 A heart that's nobly true,  
 At all those little arts can laugh,  
 That do the world subdue.”

An exceedingly elegant poetess of this time was Anne, Countess of Winchelsea. It was her great merit to write with nature, simplicity, and purity in an artificial and corrupt age. Between the publication of the “Paradise Lost” and that of Pope's “Windsor Forest,” she alone, of all the poets, used natural rather than classical imagery. “The Nocturnal Reverie,” “The Atheist and the Acorn,” are well known and admired; nor is the following, though sad, less graceful.

#### LIFE'S PROGRESS.

“ How gaily is at first begun  
 Our life's uncertain race!  
 Whilst yet that sprightly morning sun,  
 With which we first set out to run,  
 Enlightens all the place.

“ How smiling the world's prospect lies,  
 How tempting to go through!  
 Not Canaan to the prophet's eyes,  
 From Pisgah, with a sweet surprise,  
 Did more inviting show.

- “ How soft the first ideas prove  
 Which wander through our minds !  
 How full the joys, how free the love,  
 Which does that early season move,  
 As flowers the western winds !
- “ Our sighs are then but vernal air,  
 But April drops our tears ;  
 Which swiftly passing, all grows fair,  
 Whilst beauty compensates our care,  
 And youth each vapour clears.
- “ But, oh, too soon, alas ! we climb,  
 Scarce feeling we ascend,  
 The gently rising hill of time,  
 From whence with grief we see that prime,  
 And all its sweetness end.
- “ The die now cast, our station known,  
 Fond expectation past ;  
 The thorns which former days had sown,  
 To crops of late repentance grown,  
 Through which we toil at last ;
- “ Whilst every care's a driving harm,  
 That helps to bear us down ;  
 While faded smiles no more can charm,  
 But every tear's a winter storm,  
 And every look a frown.”

Dorothy, the daughter of Lord Coventry, Keeper of the Seal to James I., and wife of Sir John Packington, was a remarkable literary ornament of the seventeenth century. The authorship of that compendium of practical divinity

“The Whole Duty of Man” has been ascribed to her, on evidence that it seems difficult to doubt. Rev. Thomas Caulton, vicar of Worksop in Nottinghamshire, on his death-bed, revealed the secret of the authorship of that work, and produced the manuscript in Lady Packington’s own handwriting. She died in 1679. In the church of Hampton Lovett, in Worcestershire, she and her husband are interred; and their grandson says of them, that he was “tried for his life, and spent the greatest part of his fortune in adhering to King Charles I.; and the latter (Lady Packington) justly reputed the authoress of *The Whole Duty of Man*, who was exemplary for her great piety and goodness.”

Lady Rachel Russell’s name is generally known and deservedly esteemed. Her letters have something more to recommend them than mere literary merit. They are full of real feeling, actual experiences, and genuine piety.

These admirable women were all as remarkable for their virtues as their talents. They were lights in a dark age; and time, in reference to the two first, and the last named, has added to rather than diminished their brightness.

## CHAP. XII.

DRYDEN AND THE RISE OF CRITICISM IN ENGLAND.—FRENCH INFLUENCE.—LITERARY PATRONS.—ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF PERIODICALS.—DE FOE, ADDISON, STEELE.

MILTON is not the only great poet whose writings are an exposition of his life. Dryden's great genius, his varied course and frequent changes of opinion, his alternations of feeling from piety to profligacy, may all be traced equally in his life and in his writings,—the one elucidating the other. He was the son of a worthy Puritan in Northamptonshire, and received a liberal education at Westminster School. His first poetical production was an heroic poem in honour of Oliver Cromwell, written in a very animated style. He says of his hero,—

“ His greatness he deriv'd from Heaven alone,  
 For he was great e'er fortune made him so ;  
 And wars, like mists that rise against the sun,  
 Made him but greater seem, not greater grow.”

At the Restoration, Dryden had done with the Puritans: he hastened to write poetical addresses to the King and the Lord Chancellor; and plays being the favourite amusement of the court and

populace, he wrote several that were much admired, decency not being then considered essential to success. He married a lady of rank, and was unhappy in his conjugal relation,—which, perhaps, was the reason of the low estimate in which he held the female character. He said in one of his plays, that “woman was made from the dross and refuse of man;” to which Jeremy Collier, who censured the licentiousness of the stage with unsparing fidelity, replied wittily, “I did not know before that a man’s dross lay in his ribs; I believe it sometimes lies higher.”

After having fostered the licentiousness of the age by the publication of many rhyming dramas constructed on the French model, he wrote a defence for the Church of England against Dissenters, called “*Religio Laici*.” Soon after this he made another change of faith, embracing the Roman Catholic persuasion, at the accession of James II., and then wrote his “Hind and Panther,”—a defence of the Church of Rome; in which the hind is the Church of Rome, the panther the Church of England, and the Independents, Quakers, and Baptists, are represented as bears, hares, boars, &c.

A change of opinion that proceeds from sincere conviction, may be a subject of grief and wonder, but never of disrespect and scorn. But when such a change has been frequent, and always at a

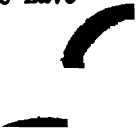
time when self-interest was likely to be promoted, it is difficult to repress suspicion and indignation. The man who was a Puritan under Oliver Cromwell, a Churchman under Charles II., and a Romanist under James II., can scarcely be thought a disinterested proselyte.

The old age of Dryden, when he had by the Revolution lost his office of laureate and the patronage of the court, was his best period. He employed himself in the work of translation from the classics, Juvenal, Persius, and Virgil; and nobly refused, though requested by his publisher, to dedicate the latter to King William III. His celebrated ode, "Alexander's Feast," was written after the publication of his translations, and his Fables still later. He died May, 1700, aged 69, having been an interested witness of the civil wars, the republic, the restoration, and the revolution.

As a poet he does not rank with the great creative minds, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton; but he is first in the very next rank. The inconsistency or vacillation of his principles may be traced, not only in his themes, but in his style, which was so perpetually varied that no English writer is so versatile, or has less mannerism. He is chargeable with having fostered, if not brought in by his rhyming dramatic poems, the vicious French style that so long after this period de-

formed our literature; and yet he is also praised for his pure English idiom, in his prose works. Indeed Dryden himself says, "If too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed not to assist the natives, but to conquer them."

He was among the first Englishmen that gave literary portraits of all the great poets of the preceding time; with him the art of criticism may be said to have begun in our land. That criticism, as a distinct branch of composition, should be needed, marks the progress of literature. When native authors were few, and libraries meagre, people who read criticised for themselves. As books multiplied, and different departments of literary effort opened, it seemed necessary that those whose learning, leisure, taste, and literary occupation permitted, should begin in some way to cater for the more general reader, — should guide the uninitiated into the throng of books, — tell of the characters of authors and the subject or style of their compositions. This had become necessary in Dryden's time; and ever since then criticism has been not only a useful, but an indispensable auxiliary to literature. That it should sometimes have been perverted by malignity or ignorance is no argument against it. Whenever a literature is rich and copious there must always be critics as purveyors to the general public. If there have





been instances where they have injured authors and deceived the public, the shame is with them for thus dishonouring a noble and liberal art. The remedy is pretty much with the public, who, as a rule, had better be more willing to believe a favourable than an unfavourable testimony. To praise on the authority of others, if an error, is at least neither an unsafe nor an invidious error. To blame severely without examination is neither candid nor just.

The French taste, before alluded to, came in with Charles II. Sparkle, point, wit, coldness, were the characteristics of the age; and our English vigour of composition greatly declined.

Another cause that contributed to retard, if not to debase literature, was royal and noble patronage. The poets had always been accustomed to be under the protection of some great man. Thus Chaucer was protected by John of Gaunt, Spenser by Sir Philip Sydney and the Earl of Essex, and Shakspeare by the Earl of Southampton; Dryden, by the successive changes of his views, had had as many patrons as creeds. Nothing could be more unfavourable to the honest expression of thought than this practice; and the misery of hope deferred that it often entailed on poets, who sued for a patron's grace, has been described by Spenser in words that never can be forgotten.

"To lose good days that might be better spent ;  
 To waste long nights in peevish discontent ;  
 To speed to-day and be put back to-morrow ;  
 To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow ;  
 To have thy prince's grace yet want her peers' ;\*  
 To have thy asking, yet wait many years ;  
 To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares ;  
 To eat thy heart with comfortless despairs ;  
 To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,  
 To spend, to give, to wait, to be undone."

The rise of a reading public in Britain has been the remedy for this evil. A really independent poet now has no patron but the public. He writes for the community at large. And though neglect and sorrow may even yet often be the portion of genius, the servile adulation of an individual, whose promises were made only to be delayed and broken, no longer exists to cramp the energies and crush the hopes of poets. They have doubtless sorrows enough without these humiliations being added.

But how came there a reading public in the land? We have seen that poets who wanted the people to know very much of their writings resorted to dramatic compositions, and the pulpit and the stage divided the people between them, before the press began to be emancipated. Books, though

\* Alluding to Elizabeth's favour and Lord Burleigh's disapprobation.

~~numerous~~ and cheap compared with the olden times, ~~and~~ were the luxury of the affluent. With the ex-  
~~ception~~ of Bunyan's "Pilgrim" and a few religious  
~~books~~, it was not the populace that was addressed  
 by writers; and so little were women thought of  
 as readers, that Mr. Macaulay assigns that fact,  
 as one reason of the indecency that marked the  
 writings of the second Charles's time. Periodicals,  
 certainly, may claim to have created and main-  
 tained a taste for reading among the people of  
 England. Newspapers had been published occa-  
 sionally during the reign of James I., and by  
 some accounts in the reign of Elizabeth, though  
 the three newspapers in the British Museum,  
 purporting to be by Lord Burleigh, "The English  
 Mercury for preventing False Reports," have been  
 lately discovered not to be genuine. It is certain  
 there were pamphlets of news, and that in 1622  
 Nathaniel Butter established a regular weekly  
 publication entitled "The Certain News of this  
 present Week." During the civil wars there were  
 several newspapers, and they attained great political  
 importance; and so essential was the press con-  
 sidered that each army carried a printer with them.  
 After the Restoration, in the memorable plague  
 year, 1665, while the court was at Oxford, a news-  
 paper, called the "Oxford Gazette," was published.  
 This, after a few numbers, changed its name to  
 "The London Gazette," and by that title came

down uninterruptedly to the present century. "The *Intelligencer*" and "The *Observer*" were two papers successively started by Roger L'Estrange, a venal writer, who always in politics sided with the prevailing party. It is said, that small as these news-books were, there was great difficulty in filling them : sometimes a blank leaf was left, and an advertisement stated it was left to enable persons to write a letter on and send with the paper. Another editor very ingeniously fell upon the plan of printing portions of the Scripture on one page, and in this way inserted the whole of the New Testament and great part of the Psalms of David.

The French preceded us in literary journals by a few years. They were with them the product of the seventeenth century, and at first originated in the ingenious contrivance of Denis de Sallo, a counsellor in the parliament of Paris, who in 1665 published his "*Journal des Sçavans*." He was followed by the celebrated critic Bayle, who brought out his *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres* in 1684. Our first English literary journals and reviews are rather amplified descriptive catalogues of new works, dull and tedious.

Daniel De Foe has certainly the merit of being the father of our general periodical literature. De Foe was the son of a dissenter resident in London. He received his education at a dissenting academy at Newington, and was early a diligent

student of his own language rather than of foreign tongues. He was intended for the ministry, but determined ultimately on trade as his pursuit. He was successively a hosier, a tile-maker, and a woollen-merchant, but succeeded in none of these occupations. His first literary work was a satire called the "True-born Englishman," beginning with the often quoted lines,—

"Wherever God erects a house of prayer,  
The devil always builds a chapel there;  
And 'twill be found upon examination,  
The latter has the largest congregation."

He was much in favour with King William; but on the accession of Queen Anne a political pamphlet brought him under condemnation, and he was confined in Newgate. During that imprisonment he planned his "Review," which he intended should contain a synopsis of the current events, and original articles on literature and morals. De Foe particularly desired to benefit his countrywomen by this publication, to excite an appetite for reading among them. He continued it with very little encouragement twice a week during his two years' residence at Newgate, and for some time after, and was at length compelled to give it up. Probably his reputation as a political partizan may have injured his "Review."

Daniel De Foe was thirty-eight when his first work appeared; he died aged sixty-nine, having written *two hundred and ten* books and pamphlets. His "Review," though unsuccessful, has the merit of suggesting the "Tatler" and the "Spectator;" works with more polish but not more earnestness than his own. The pure manly English style of De Foe, at a time when French fashions of prettiness and artificiality, and many learned affectations prevailed, merits high praise, and may be referred to the fact he has commemorated, of the careful study of his own language in his youth. In narration he has rarely been equalled for a life-like reality, and a continued interest: witness his "History of the Great Plague," his "Memoirs of a Cavalier," and above all his "Robinson Crusoe." In his zeal probably to promote the interests of virtue, in some of his works he depicted vice, and chose the humbler grades of society as his subject; but the lesson, if such it is intended, is too coarse and revolting to be any thing else than disgusting, and posterity has very naturally and properly consigned these latter works to oblivion.

With Addison's "Spectator," a new era may be said to have commenced. The short essay became instantly a favourite. People who would in that age have been frightened at a book, were allured by a little paper; and when in such small compass so much wit and wisdom was found, it is not won-

derful that they read with avidity, and that the taste once excited has gone on increasing even to the present time. We are apt now to forget the fragmentary and disjointed character of the "Spectator" when it first appeared: we have it in volumes, and the time when it was delivered at the house-door in a few leaves is forgotten. Addison's prose has been thought to have given to the English language a beauty it never possessed before: its smoothness, polish, agreeable pleasantries, happy turns of expression, were long commended as the highest perfection of grace and elegance. In the present day, however, the style of the older writers is often preferred for its greater earnestness and vigour; the very qualities, probably, which the public of the age of Addison and Steele was not sufficiently educated and thoughtful to appreciate. Dr. Johnson, in his *Life of Addison*\*, thus remarks on the state of English society when the "Spectator" was first issued:—"That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk, was then rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. Politics formed almost the sole topic of conversation among the gentlemen, and scandal among the ladies; swear-

\* Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.

ing and indecency were fashionable vices ; gaming and drunkenness abounded ; and the practice of duelling was carried to a most irrational excess. In the theatre, as well as in society, the corruption of Charles the Second's reign continued to prevail. And men of the highest rank were the habitual encouragers of the coarse amusements of bull-baiting, bear-baiting, and prize-fighting."

Addison and Steele state in the "Spectator," the objects they had in view. "I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality ; that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermittent starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen. The mind that lies fallow but a single day, sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture. It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men ; I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs, and assemblies, at tea-tables, and coffee-houses."

It will be seen that this distinguished man



aimed rather at an outward than an inward improvement of his age. The evil lay deep in the polluted human heart, given over to work all iniquity with greediness. This heart was left untouched by such remedies as Addison prescribed. Religion, not mere literature, is the real regenerator of the human race. Nevertheless there is certainly great merit due to one who brought about an external reformation as to manners and taste, which would in many cases doubtless be auxiliary to the introduction of loftier and more abiding principles. The man who drains a morass, and makes it ready for cultivation, is equally a worker with him who tills and plants, and finally makes it a fertile field.

Probably all literary biography does not present so remarkable an instance of a man who loved virtue, and yet failed to practice it, as Sir Richard Steele, the schoolfellow, friend, and coadjutor of Addison. His whole life was a struggle between his principles and his passions. He was constantly striving to conform to his own model of virtue, and constantly failed; because he strove in his own strength, without dependence on Him without whom nothing is wise, pure, holy, or successful. Let those who think an elegant literary taste, and an admiration of moral virtues, a sufficient shield from the evil of their own hearts, read the life of Sir Richard Steele, and be admonished.

## CHAP. XIII.

MIND AND MATTER: THEIR STUDENTS AND EXPOSITORS—  
HON. ROBERT BOYLE, JOHN RAY, JOHN LOCKE, CATHERINE  
COCKBURNE, AND SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

AMONG the immediate successors of Lord Bacon who studied on his plan, the most distinguished was the Hon. Robert Boyle, born 1627. He became acquainted at Oxford with Dr. Wilkins, a scientific man, who had married the sister of Oliver Cromwell. A company of learned men who inquired freely into the causes of natural phenomena met at Dr. Wilkins's rooms at Wadham College. The researches and inquiries of these gentlemen were continued until they were incorporated in 1662 under the title of THE ROYAL SOCIETY. Of this society the Hon. Robert Boyle was a most distinguished and industrious member. He was eminently a Bible student, and all his scientific researches served but to reveal to him the more clearly the goodness, wisdom, and power of God. He wrote extensively on religious subjects, and was solicited to adopt the clerical profession, which he declined to do, fearing the responsibilities of the pastor's

office, and conscientiously alleging as a yet stronger reason, "Not having felt within himself an inward motion to it by the Holy Ghost."

His works occupy six thick quarto volumes. Chemistry and pneumatics he particularly studied, making many valuable improvements in the air-pump, and, by his inquiries, leading the way to the further researches of his successors. His religious works are peculiarly valuable, as he was eminently a Christian philosopher. Truly and beautifully does he say,—“It is not by a slight survey, but by a diligent and skilful scrutiny of the works of God, that a man must be, by a rational and affective conviction, engaged, to acknowledge with the prophet, that the Author of Nature is ‘wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.’”

Contemporary with this distinguished man, and only a year younger, was a man born in a very different station of life—John Ray, the son of a blacksmith, at Black Notley, in Essex, who, however, gave his son a liberal education. Ray was the first botanist that England produced; and, with the exception of Linnæus, the most valuable writer on the science, of which he may be considered one of the founders. He also was a religious man and a sufferer for conscience sake. The Act of Uniformity in 1662, which injured so many good men, drove Ray out of his fellowship

of Trinity College, and effectually prevented his entering into the Church. His most popular work is "*The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation.*" His reason for composing this work he thus states:— "Being not permitted to serve the Church with my tongue in preaching, I know not but it may be my duty to serve it with my hand in writing; and I have made choice of this subject as thinking myself best qualified to treat it." This work was much admired and extensively read. It is now in some measure superseded by the greater popularity of Paley's "*Natural Theology.*" It is, however, due to Ray, to state that Paley's work has been termed "an imitation of Ray's volume; and he has derived from it many of his most striking arguments and illustrations."\*

Much as science had advanced since Lord Bacon's method of induction from experiment had been adopted, still attention had only been directed to what the senses presented to the mind, while the operations of the mind itself, in the acquisition of knowledge, had not in England been investigated. John Locke was the first who was brought to consider this very abstract, and yet most useful subject. As all men reason, it is important to know by what process they reason, and how they arrive at just conclusions.

\* Chambers's Cyclopædia of Literature, vol. i. p. 524.

This distinguished man was of gentle birth, and was liberally educated. He studied medicine, intending to adopt it as his profession; but ill health, with which he was troubled all his life, prevented his engaging in medical practice, and compelled him to reside much on the Continent. His attention was directed to the study of the human mind by what appeared an accident. He says to the reader in a prefatory letter of his celebrated "Essay on the Human Understanding:" "I should tell thee that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this\*, found themselves quickly at a stand from the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts that perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course, and that, before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were or were not fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry."

This was the origin of a work that was destined to open a new department of study—moral and

\* From the subject of the "Essay."

mental philosophy; and to suggest trains of thought that have been presented in numberless treatises from that time to the present. Locke was an eminently virtuous and pious man. Sir James Mackintosh has said of him: "Educated among the English dissenters during the short period of their political ascendancy, he early imbibed that deep piety and ardent spirit of liberty which actuated that body of men. And he probably imbibed, also, in their schools, that disposition to metaphysical inquiries that has every where accompanied the Calvinistic theology."\* The same distinguished writer adds,— "Few books have contributed more to rectify prejudice, to undermine established errors, to diffuse a just mode of thinking, to excite a fearless spirit of inquiry, and yet to contain it within the boundaries which Nature has prescribed to the human understanding." Besides the "Essay on the Human Understanding," he wrote, while residing in Holland, "A Letter concerning Toleration" (his first work); and subsequently "Thoughts concerning Education," which diffused far juster views on the subject of moral and mental training than had previously prevailed, and led the way to the more rational system of instruction adopted in our own times; "The Reasonableness of Chris-


\* Edinburgh Review, vol. xxxvi. p. 229.

tianity ;” and an admirable tract, published after his death, “On the Conduct of the Understanding.”

Locke’s frequent residence on the Continent was not always from choice. His opinions on the subject of liberty were too free to be tolerated by the ruling powers, and he shared the dangers and difficulties of his friend and patron the Earl of Shaftesbury. He was offered a post after the Revolution ; but ill health prevented his accepting it. His last days were spent at Oates, in Essex, the seat of Sir F. Masham, soothed by the kindly sympathy of Lady Masham, to whom he had long been attached by the strong ties of mutual esteem.

Locke’s remarks on “Prejudice” are worthy to be studied by every conscientious reader.

“Every one is forward to complain of the prejudices that mislead other men or parties, as if he were free and had none of his own. This being objected on all sides, it is agreed that it is a fault, and a hinderance to knowledge. What now is the cure ? no other than this, that every man should let alone others’ prejudices and examine his own. Nobody is convinced of his by the accusation of another ; he recriminates by the same rule, and is clear. The only way to remove this great cause of ignorance and error out of the world, is for every one impartially to examine himself. If others will not deal fairly with their own minds, does that make my errors truths, or ought it to make me in love with them, and willing to impose on myself ? If others love cataracts on their eyes, should that hinder me from couching of mine as soon as I could ? Every one declares against blindness, and yet who almost is not fond



of that which dims his sight, and keeps the clear light out of his mind, which should lead him into truth and knowledge? False or doubtful positions, relied upon as unquestioned maxims, keep those in the dark from truth, who build on them. Such are usually the prejudices imbibed from education, party, reverence, fashion, interest, &c. This is the mote which every one sees in his brother's eye, but never regards the beam in his own. For who is there almost that is ever brought fairly to examine his own principles, and see whether they are such as will bear the trial? But yet this should be one of the first things every one should set about, and be scrupulous in, who would rightly conduct his understanding in the search of truth and knowledge."

When some of the opinions advanced by Locke were controverted, it is a curious fact, that among the most energetic of his defenders was a young lady of twenty-two, Mrs. Catherine Cockburne. She wrote a defence of Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" against the attacks of Dr. Burnet of the Charter-house. The work so pleased the philosopher that he commissioned Mr. King\* (afterwards Lord Chancellor) to present her with some books as a testimony of his satisfaction. This lady, who had adopted the Roman Catholic faith, was induced by her powerful and inquiring mind to reconsider her grounds for adopting it, and the result was her return to protestant principles. Her duties as a wife and mother, with a very limited fortune, compelled

\* This occurred in 1701. See "Female Worthies."



her to lay aside her studies for twenty years. She then resumed them, though in feeble health, and wrote several treatises on Moral Duty and Obligation, and some controversial philosophical works on the writings of Dr. Rutherford and Dr. Samuel Clarke. She wrote with force and clearness on some of the deepest questions that can exercise the human mind; and her exposition of her favourite Locke must have had the effect of popularising his profound book among unlearned and female readers.

Ten years after the birth of Locke, a feeble infant was born at Woolsthorpe in Lincolnshire (1642), whose mother was a widow, having lost her husband just six months after their union. This child, born in such melancholy circumstances, afterwards became the great Sir Isaac Newton! "The Glory of Human Nature."

His widowed mother guarded his infant years with the tenderest care and the most untiring watchfulness, which, indeed, the feebleness of the child rendered indispensable; and though she contracted another marriage during his childhood, she was ever most careful of her son's interests. He was addicted to study from his earliest years; and when, on being removed from school, he was required to manage the affairs of the small estate that devolved on his mother and himself, he was found so abstracted, from having his mind occupied

with other thoughts, that he was quite incompetent to the task. He therefore entered Trinity College, Cambridge, and gave himself entirely up to the mathematical and mechanical studies he loved so well. Having obtained a professorship in his university, he turned his attention to optics, making discoveries in reference to light that entirely changed the aspects of science, and led to the most important results. He became ultimately president of the Royal Society. He made from reflection on a simple circumstance—the fall of an apple from a tree—a discovery of the great law of gravitation, “which he showed to affect the vast orbs that revolve around the sun not less than the smallest objects in our own globe.” This theory he explained in his “*Principia*,” or The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy. A telescope, which he executed entirely himself, is now in the library of the Royal Society of London, and bears the inscription, —

INVENTED BY SIR ISAAC NEWTON, AND MADE WITH HIS  
OWN HANDS, 1671.

Great as Newton was as a philosopher, he was equally great as a man and a Christian. When James II. sought to introduce Popery into the land, and wished the university to admit Father Francis, “an ignorant monk of the Benedictine order,” to the rank and privilege of a Master of Arts,

no one was more firm in resisting this encroachment than Sir Isaac Newton; and when the vice-chancellor of the university was summoned before the ecclesiastical court, Newton was appointed a delegate to defend the privileges of the university. He was the parliamentary representative of Cambridge, and discharged his duties with wisdom and integrity.

He wrote much on theological subjects, being a humble, sincere believer in the truths of Christianity. He was eminently a Bible student, and always loved to depict the harmony of science with revealed religion. His modesty, peacefulness, and candour were all the product of the genuine piety that lived in his every action. When complimented on his discoveries, his reply is well known:—

“I do not know what I appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself now and then in finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

His tranquil character is shown in the fact, that some quibbling philosophers made it a practice to contest, controvert, and undervalue his discoveries, vexing him with irritating questions and other annoyances. This caused him to desire to withhold some of his discoveries for a time, saying, “To publish a new discovery was as bad

as entering on a lawsuit." The readiness with which he owned himself in the wrong, as soon as convinced of the fact, is proved in the following beautiful letter he wrote to John Locke.

"Sir,

"Being of opinion that you endeavoured to embroil me with women, and by other means, I was so much affected with it, as when one told me you were sickly, and would not live, I answered, 'Twere better if you were dead.' I desire you to forgive me this uncharitableness, for I am now satisfied that what you have done is just, and I beg your pardon for my having had hard thoughts of you for it, and for representing that you struck at the root of morality in a principle you laid down in your book of ideas, and designed to pursue in another book; and that I took you for a Hobbist.\* I beg your pardon also for saying or thinking that there was a design to sell me an office, or to embroil me. I am your most humble and unfortunate servant,

"IS. NEWTON."

To this Locke affectionately replied: —

"Sir,

"I have been ever since I first knew you so entirely your friend, and thought you so much mine, that I could not have believed what you tell me of yourself had I had it from anybody else. And though I cannot but be mightily troubled that you should have had so many wrong and unjust thoughts of me, yet, next to the return of good offices, such as from a sincere good will I have ever done you, I

---

\* Thomas Hobbes was a celebrated metaphysical and infidel writer, born 1588, died 1679.

receive your acknowledgment of the contrary as the kindest thing you could have done me, since it gives me hopes that I have not lost a friend I so valued." \* \* \* \*

These letters let the reader into the very hearts of two of England's worthiest sons. How sensitive must Newton's conscience have been to induce him to disclose to the person he had injured in thought only, what, but for his own frankness, would never have been suspected! How beautiful in both was the union of the profoundest intellect with fervent piety, and with manners that illustrated the primitive simplicity of the Gospel! Of the value of Newton's discoveries to his age and posterity, the appropriate couplet of the poet gives the best estimate:

"Nature, and Nature's laws, lay hid in night :  
God said, ' Let Newton be,' and all was light."

## CHAP. XIV.

ASPECTS OF THE LITERATURE OF THE EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY.—ITS LEADING MINDS.

THE distinguishing characteristic of the literature of the last century was its diffusiveness, as we have attempted to show in our remarks on periodical literature. The standard literature of the time partook of the graceful manner and brilliant sarcasm that the essayists had introduced. There was an excess of external smoothness and polish, less depth and intrinsic value.

Following in the path that Dryden had trod, and his avowed disciple, Pope became the most popular poet of his time, and exerted an influence not only over his own age, but over all that have followed. He was born in London, 1688. His father, a Roman Catholic by religion, and a linen-draper by trade, made a fortune, and retired to Binfield, in Windsor Forest. Pope's well known lines,

“As yet a child, and all unknown to fame,  
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came,”

have made all readers familiar with his remarkable precocity. “The child was” decidedly “the father to the man” in Pope's case; for, after having re-

ceived instruction from the family priest, being sent to school at Twyford, he lampooned the master, and his parents had to take him home. He was then twelve years old, and he continued his own education from that time, going neither to school or college. He wrote constantly, for his own amusement, pastorals, imitations of the old poets, and satires, and formed during early youth an acquaintance with some of the first writers of the day. His first published work was his "Essay on Criticism," written when he was only twenty-one. This work was commended by Addison in his *Spectator*, and speedily became popular. His first poem was occasioned by Lord Petre having stolen a lock of hair from Miss Arabella Fermor, to whom he was paying his addresses. The theft was resented, and a serious misunderstanding ensued. Pope wrote his mock-heroic poem, "The Rape of the Lock," in order to make a jest of the affair, and, as he said, to "laugh them together again." His good-natured intention was not successful, but his poem was considered so elegant a piece of pleasantry, that it immediately ranked him high among the poets of the time.

The most beautiful aspect of Pope's private character is his tender affection for his parents—his mother particularly.

"Me let the tender office long engage,  
To rock the cradle of declining age;

With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,  
 Make languor smile and smooth the bed of death ;  
 Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,  
 And keep at least one parent from the sky."

He was, as from his filial piety might be expected, a warm and faithful friend. But to opponents, or literary contemporaries whom he envied or disliked, he was bitter and personal to the last degree. He wrote a satire called the *Dunciad*, unrivalled for power, wit, and malignity, in which he ridiculed and lampooned nearly all his contemporaries who were not of his opinions, or among his friends. Cowper said, "I have often wondered that the same poet who wrote the '*Dunciad*' should have written these lines:—

'That mercy I to others show,  
 That mercy show to me.'

Alas for Pope, if the mercy he showed to others was the measure of the mercy he received!"

In his verse he adopted chiefly the measure of Dryden, who was the particular object of his veneration. He attained, however, greater terseness, correctness, and melody than his master. His couplets are faultless in cadence, rhyme, and polished diction. In his own time, and for forty years after his death in 1744, no one thought of questioning his claim to the title of the most correct, brilliant, and polished of English



poets. Cowper, first, and more recently Bowles, Southey, Wordsworth, and others, have doubted whether the artificial taste that was manifest throughout his works, the sympathy with polished life, and the rancour of his sarcasm, were not faults that marred his genius as a poet, quite as much as they narrowed his feeling as a man. A lengthened controversy on this point has arisen, Pope's defenders being neither few nor mean. Lord Byron vehemently vindicated him, and quite recently\* the Earl of Carlisle has eloquently advanced his claims to rank among the mightiest poets of the land.

It cannot with justice be said that Pope never depicted natural scenery and objects, for his "Windsor Forest" is full of such imagery and circumstances. The death of a pheasant has been most graphically depicted:—

"See! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,  
 And mounts exulting on triumphant wings:  
 Short is his joy; he feels the fiery wound,  
 Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground.  
 Ah! what avail his glossy varying dyes,  
 His purple crest and scarlet circled eyes?  
 The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,  
 His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold."

His "Essay on Man," though not approved for its

\* Nov. 1850, Lectures on Pope, delivered at the Leeds Mechanics' Institute.

philosophy, is read for its poetry, and has supplied more rhymed mottos that have come into general use than any other poem in the language; the smoothness and point of the verse frequently making people indifferent to the abstract truth of the sentiment. Thus the often-quoted

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right,”

calls the attention from the fact—that the life can scarcely be really right unless the faith is so; because we are amenable to a God who sees the heart, and knows the motive, and “by whom,” with reference to these, “actions are weighed.” The same fallacy is found in

“For forms of government let fools contest;  
Whate'er is best administer'd is best;”—

a principle that would annihilate truth, liberty, and justice, and make human, and often individual, caprice the ruler.

No one can accuse Pope of want of tenderness who reads his elegy to the memory of an unfortunate lady, where in the mournful cadence of the verse we seem to hear the falling of the poet's tears, and the beating of his indignant heart.

But nothing in Pope's poetry surpasses his “Messiah,” and his splendid ode “The Dying Christian to his Soul.” These are full of hallowed

fire, and will live as long as the language. Oh! that he had written more of these strains. A distinguished critic\* has recently remarked, that Pope is less understood and admired by the people of England,—the masses of the reading public,—than Milton and some of the grand old poets. This perhaps, true in the general, is completely true as regards female readers, who have been deterred by his sweeping censures against their sex, and his frightful pictures of heartless female characters, from reading his works with any other emotion than a sort of admiring dislike.

Yet if Pope condemned with deadly bitterness, he knew how to praise with glowing fervour. The poet once, travelling from the seat of Lord Bathurst to that of Lord Oxford, stopped at Ross in Herefordshire, where Mr. John Kyrle, who lived to the age of ninety, and died 1724, had passed a life of active benevolence. Pope made this good man ever memorable as

#### THE MAN OF ROSS.

“But all our praises, why should lords engross?  
 Rise, honest muse, and sing the Man of Ross!  
 Pleas'd Vaga echoes through her winding bounds,  
 And rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds.  
 Who hung with woods yon mountain's sultry brow?  
 From the dry rock who bade the waters flow?”

---

\* Mr. De Quincy in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine.

Not to the skies in useless columns tost,  
 Or in proud falls magnificently lost ;  
 But clear and artless pouring through the plain  
 Health to the sick and solace to the swain.  
 Whose causeway parts the vale with shady rows ?  
 Whose seats the weary traveller repose ?  
 Who taught the heaven-directed spire to rise ?  
 The Man of Ross, each lisping babe replies.  
 Behold the market-place with poor o'erspread,  
 The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread :  
 He feeds yon almshouse, neat but void of state,  
 Where age and want sit smiling at the gate ;  
 Him portion'd maids, apprentic'd orphans bless'd,  
 The young who labour and the old who rest.  
 Is any sick ? the Man of Ross relieves,  
 Prescribes, attends, the med'cine makes and gives.  
 Is there a variance ? enter but his door,  
 Balk'd are the courts, and contest is no more ;  
 Despairing quacks with curses fled the place,  
 And vile attorneys, now a useless race.  
 Thrice happy man ! enabled to pursue  
 What all so wish, but want the power to do.  
 Oh, say what sums that generous hand supply,  
 What mines to swell that boundless charity ?  
 Of debts and taxes, wife and children clear,  
 This man possess'd five hundred pounds a year.  
 Blush, grandeur, blush ! proud courts, withdraw your  
     blaze !  
 Ye little stars, hide your diminished rays."

The industry of Pope was as remarkable as his  
 genius, as his translation of Homer attests. It is  
 said he was able to dispatch fifty verses a day ;  
 and whatever may be the faults found by scholars

in the translation, one fact is certain,—that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were by his means first made known to the mass of people of England.

The faults of Pope were very much the faults of his age. Swift and Bolingbroke, his particular friends, were keen, brilliant, party writers, skilled to make the worse appear the better cause, both possessing more genius than principle, more wit than wisdom. Ridicule and satire were the favourite weapons of the time. Nothing was treated seriously, no one was supposed to be in earnest; so that the reader who now turns to the writings of the early part of the last century is chilled by their heartlessness, even while startled by their brilliancy. Poetry, during the time of Pope, began to decline; a horde of servile imitators arose, whose rhymed didactic couplets were both trite and dull.

Hence it was like a pure stream in a sandy desert, when Thomson arose and gave to the world his admirable delineation of *The Seasons*,—full of accurate observation of natural phenomena, as well as of poetic power, concluding, or rather harmoniously rounding, the whole with that magnificent hymn which is Miltonic in its dignity and grace. From the time that Milton had prayed that his soul might have the light, denied his eyes,—

“Rather thou, celestial light! shine inward,”—

nothing had been written so noble as an invocation for Divine aid as Thomson's—

“ Father of light and life! thou good supreme!  
O teach me what is good, teach me thyself;  
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,  
From every low pursuit, and feed my soul  
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure,  
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss!”

The intellectual influence of the Scriptures is very manifest in Thomson's Poems. The story of Lavinia is a modernised, and necessarily weaker, paraphrase of the Book of Ruth; still beautiful, though with the hues of English rural life poorly substituted for the clear oriental glow and lovely simplicity of that sacred pastoral. The 104th Psalm seems to have suggested that noble hymn which so appropriately concludes “The Seasons.”

Among general readers, the Poet of the Seasons has been read chiefly, sometimes only, in the great poem that gave him distinction. That work, as a calendar of nature throughout the year, has an untiring freshness and beauty, as varied as it is obvious. To all lovers of poetry his “Castle of Indolence” has a thousand charms. The Spenserian stanza, which he was the first among modern poets to revive, was not immediately popular. It requires more than any measure (blank verse alone excepted) a good reader. And good English reading is, even now,

not a common accomplishment. Perhaps to this cause must be attributed the fact which we have been at some pains to verify, that the delicious poem in question has scarcely had its full meed of popular appreciation. The gentle bard, it is understood, was fond of ease, and let meditation run into reverie, and quietude settle into listlessness. How sweet and subtle are the descriptions of the beguiling joys, the insidious encroachments, of the "enchanting wizard" Indolence! and how terrible the delineations of the moral! Rich as our descriptive poetry now is, it would be difficult to find five consecutive stanzas more full of soothing images of rest, of voluptuous dreamy sweetness, than the opening lines of the "Castle of Indolence."

"In lowly dale, fast by a river's side,  
 With woody hill o'er hill encompass'd round,  
 A most enchanting wizard did abide,  
 Than whom a fiend more fell is no where found.  
 It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground;  
 And there a season atween June and May,  
 Half pranked with spring, with summer half imbrown'd,  
 A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,  
 No living wight could work, ne cared e'en for play.


"Was nought around but images of rest,  
 Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,  
 And flowery beds that slumbrous influence kest  
 From poppies breath'd, and beds of pleasant green,  
 Where never yet was creeping creature seen.

Meantime unnumber'd glittering streamlets play'd,  
 And hurled every-where their waters sheen,  
 That, as they bicker'd thro' the sunny glade,  
 Tho' restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

“Join'd to the prattle of the purling rills,  
 Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,  
 And flocks loud-bleating from the distant hills,  
 And vacant shepherds piping in the dale ;  
 And now and then sweet Philomel would wail,  
 Or stock-doves plain amid the forest deep,  
 That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale ;  
 And still a coil the grasshopper did keep ;  
 Yet all these sounds yblent inclined all to sleep.

“Full in the passage of the vale, above,  
 A sable, silent, solemn, forest stood,  
 Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,  
 As Idless fancy'd in her dreaming mood ;  
 And up the hills, on either side, a wood  
 Of blackening pines, by waving to and fro,  
 Sent forth a sleepy horror thro' the blood ;  
 And where this valley winded out, below,  
 The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard,  
 to flow.

“A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,  
 Of Dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,  
 And of gay Castles in the clouds that pass,  
 For ever flushing round a summer sky ;  
 There eke the soft Delights, that witchingly  
 Instil a wanton sweetness thro' the breast,  
 And the calm Pleasures, always hover'd nigh ;  
 But whate'er smack'd of noyance or unrest  
 Was far, far off, expell'd from this delicious nest.”





Imitative and tame as the herd of mere versifiers were who copied the manner without having the fire of Pope, yet a number of distinguished poets arose towards the middle and end of the last century; of whom the best known are Goldsmith, Akenside, Gray, and Collins. These have left poems familiar and dear to all lovers of just sentiment, charming description, and graceful flowing verse.

“The deserted Village” is, as to outward form and structure, as polished as any thing written by Pope, while its simple pathos, manly fervour, and graphic description find a way at once to the heart of every reader. Then, as to “The Traveller,” we look in vain in the same compass for such delineation of national character. Belgians, French, Swiss, Italians, pass before us; their strength and weakness powerfully depicted by the poet, and the causes of that strength and weakness laid bare by the philosopher; the golden light of a pure philanthropy irradiating all. That these poems are equally dear and familiar to our countrymen is a fact that consoles us for the many sins of society against its poetic teachers. Whatever Oliver Goldsmith attempted (and he wrote in almost every department of literature), was always first rate of its kind; and probably no writer of the last century has employed the pens of so many biographers in the present, or called up so

largely the loving appreciation of the reading public of our own time.

Akenside is at present unjustly neglected. His "Pleasures of Imagination," though not in itself an imaginative poem, abounds in noble passages.

"Oh! blest of Heaven, whom not the languid songs  
 Of Luxury, the syren! not the tribes  
 Of sordid Wealth, nor all the gaudy spoils  
 Of pageant Honour, can seduce to leave  
 Those ever-blooming sweets, which from the store  
 Of Nature fair Imagination culls  
 To charm the enliven'd soul! What though not all  
 Of mortal offspring can attain the heights  
 Of envied life; though only few possess  
 Patrician treasures or imperial state;  
 Yet Nature's care, to all her children just,  
 With richer treasures and an ampler state,  
 Endows at large whatever happy man  
 Will deign to use them. His the city's pomp,  
 The rural honours his. Whate'er adorns -  
 The princely dome, the column and the arch,  
 The breathing marbles and the sculptur'd gold,  
 Beyond the proud possessor's narrow claim,  
 His tuneful breast enjoys. For him, the spring  
 Distils her dews, and from the silken gem  
 Its lucid leaves unfolds: for him, the hand  
 Of Autumn tinges every fertile branch  
 With blooming gold, and blushes like the morn.  
 Each passing hour sheds tribute from her wings;  
 And still new beauties meet his lonely walk,  
 And loves unfelt attract him. Not a breeze  
 Flies o'er the meadow, not a cloud imbibes  
 The setting sun's effulgence, not a strain

From all the tenants of the warbling shade  
 Ascends, but whence his bosom can partake  
 Fresh pleasure, unprov'd. Nor thence partakes  
 Fresh pleasure only : for the attentive mind,  
 By this harmonious action on her powers,  
 Becomes herself harmonious : wont so oft  
 In outward things to meditate the charm  
 Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home  
 To find a kindred order, to exert  
 Within herself this elegance of love,  
 This fair inspir'd delight : her temper'd powers  
 Refine at length, and every passion wears  
 A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.  
 But if to ampler prospects, if to gaze  
 On Nature's form, where, negligent of all  
 These lesser graces, she assumes the post  
 Of that eternal majesty that weigh'd  
 The world's foundations, if to these the mind  
 Exalts her daring eye ; then mightier far  
 Will be the change, and nobler. Would the forms  
 Of servile custom cramp her generous powers ?  
 Would sordid policies, the barbarous growth  
 Of ignorance and-rapine, bow her down  
 To tame pursuits, to indolence and fear ?  
 Lo ! she appeals to Nature, to the winds  
 And rolling waves, the sun's unwearied course,  
 The elements and seasons : all declare  
 For what the eternal Maker has ordain'd  
 The powers of man : we feel within ourselves  
 His energy divine : he tells the heart,  
 He meant, he made us to behold and love  
 What he beholds and loves, the general orb  
 Of life and being ; to be great like him,  
 Beneficent and active. Thus the men  
 Whom Nature's works can charm, with God himself

Hold converse ; grow familiar, day by day,  
 With his conceptions, act upon his plan ;  
 And form to his, the relish of their souls."

Gray, in his incomparable Elegy and Odes, left specimens so rich of the pure ore that he possessed, that every reader laments he did not work the mine more continuously. To acquire rather than to diffuse appears to have been his delight : would that in an intellectual sense he had felt the truth, "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

It is certainly very curious that these poets seldom wrote as if they either cared or expected to find female readers among the public. They might occasionally address some particular female friend, whom they evidently regarded as a mental exception to the sex ; and the result is, that a certain coldness is felt in their writings. Collins's justly celebrated "Ode on the Passions" gives breathing, burning, lines to Fear, Anger, Hope, Despair ; but to Love he gives two lines, —

"Love fram'd with Mirth, a gay fantastic round ;  
 Loose were her tresses, and her zone unbound."

In truth, it is not surprising that a witty and eloquent female writer of the present day should have classed these, with Shenstone, Hammond, and others, under one phrase, "Poetical Old Bachelors."

During the most prosaic period of the seventeenth century, 1765 to 1770, an incident oc-

curred unparelled in the history of literature. The inhabitants of Bristol had been much interested by some articles of antique form that appeared from time to time in their paper relative to their city in the olden time, and purporting to be written by a monk named "Rowley" of the fourteenth century. These extracts excited great attention. They had been discovered, it was said, in the muniment room of St. Mary's Radcliffe Church, by a boy — Thomas Chatterton, the posthumous child of the late subchanter of that church. This boy, a reserved, quiet, dreamy-looking being, had been from his earliest years accustomed to roam about the church; and, having, from his infancy, little other companionship than the society of his widowed mother and elder sister, what wonder if

"He caught the trick of grief,  
And sigh'd amid his playthings."

As often as he could, he was rambling about the old church. He was totally unlike other boys; but, though considered eccentric, the secret of his genius was unsuspected. Indeed, one schoolmaster gave up the task of teaching him to read, and the poor mother, alarmed at his dulness or waywardness, became his teacher, and the child "fell in love," to use her words, with an old black-letter book, and learned rapidly. He acquired this power suddenly at seven years of age, and at eight would have

spent his whole time reading if allowed to do so. After this he was admitted into Colston's Free School at Bristol, and had the reputation there of being a strange incomprehensible boy. He was apprenticed by this school to Mr. John Lambert, attorney, at Bristol, for seven years. This master discovered Chatterton's poetic tastes, and felt the utmost contempt for them, tearing up any stray pieces, and throwing the fragments at him with the words, "*There is your stuff!*"

Not long after the strange newspaper articles, some poems by the old monk appeared, and the learned throughout the land were delighted at having recovered a treasure of antiquity so long unknown. The antique style and spelling were remarkable; the imagination displayed would have been admirable in any age. There were, however, some words that students of the English language, particularly Gray the poet, and Mason, knew could not be so old as the date assigned to the poems; and a strict investigation took place, when it was at length discovered that Chatterton himself was the author of the papers and poems that had delighted and puzzled the literary throughout the land. The resentment now felt was as strong as the admiration had previously been great. People might have pardoned the strange deception, but they could not pardon their having been thus led into expressing unbounded admiration of an obscure boy's poems,

which, if written in his own name, and in modern phraseology, they would not have looked at. Alas! it is an awful thing to tamper with the majesty of truth. They were justly incensed; but, while sternly rebuking the deception, they forgot to rebuke their own offended pride and their vindictive anger. The most bitter of his censurers were persons who, without either Chatterton's genius or temptations, had themselves perpetrated literary deceptions. Horace Walpole, the cold neglecter and deliberate insulter of Chatterton, had written his romance, "The Castle of Otranto;" and in the preface to the first edition he deliberately asserts that "it was found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England, and was printed at Naples in black letter in the year 1529!" Friendly advice, faithful sympathy, kind remonstrance, might have enabled the youth to live to atone amply for the strange step he took in his early enthusiastic boyhood; when, with none to advise him, neither confidant nor counsellor, his brain heated by glowing visions of antiquity, and, possessed by a poetical delirium, he thought not of abstract right or wrong, nor of future consequences. Alas! the latter were very terrible. He left his stern master, came to London hoping to obtain literary employment, and, after some weeks of deadly struggle with neglect and want, lost his reason,

and, having none to watch him, died by his own hand, at the age of seventeen years and nine months. Wordsworth calls him

“The marvellous boy!  
The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride.”

It is recorded of him, that, except in the antiquarian compositions of his fancy, he was singularly and proudly truthful. His word from childhood could be relied on. It is evident that in the depth of his loneliness and sorrow, and an unfriended stranger in London, he had deep thoughts of God, and many sweet seasons of resignation. A short time before he lost his reason he wrote the following beautiful lines.

“O God, whose thunder shakes the sky,  
Whose eye this atom globe surveys,  
To Thee, my only rock, I fly,  
Thy mercy in thy justice praise.

“The mystic mazes of thy will,  
The shadows of celestial light,  
Are past the power of human skill;  
But what the Eternal acts is right.

“Oh, teach me in the trying hour,  
When anguish swells the dewy tear,  
To still my sorrows on thy power,  
Thy goodness love, thy justice fear.

“If in this bosom aught but Thee,  
Encroaching, sought a boundless sway,  
Omniscience could the danger see,  
And mercy took the cause away.



“ Then why, my soul, dost thou complain  
 Why drooping seek the dark recess ?  
 Shake off the melancholy chain,  
 For God created all to bless.

“ But ah ! my breast is human still ;  
 The rising sigh, the falling tear,  
 My languid vitals' feeble thrill,  
 The sickness of my soul declare.

“ But yet with fortitude resign'd,  
 I'll thank the inflicter of the blow,  
 Forbid the sigh, compose my mind,  
 Nor let the gush of misery flow.

“ The gloomy mantle of the night,  
 Which on my sinking spirit steals,  
 Will vanish at the morning light,  
 Which God, my east ! my sun ! reveals.”

Meanwhile, between the time of the death of Chatterton, 1770, and the publication of the poems of Cowper, 1782, a new and most original poet arose—George Crabbe, who has been called

“ Nature's sternest painter and her best.”

If originality mean not only something new, but something distinct from every thing else, Crabbe may well be regarded as truly original. Neither before nor since has there been any poetry like his. He has been said to have founded a school : but though there have been many students in that school, none have practised its rules, or imitated its master in those distinctive peculiarities

that make at once the power and the pain of his poetry. He is indeed "The Bard of Truth and Nature." But it is rugged truth and unlovely nature. Imagination, that to other poets gives the wings by which they soar aloft to purer regions, gave to him the staff by which he steadied his steps in those murky glooms and pitfalls of this world that he so minutely explored. Human nature in its darkest, meanest, dreariest aspects, was his study. And because he had the heart of a philanthropist and the brain of a poet, and his terrible matter-of-fact characters are withal intensely human, his descriptions take firm hold of the reader, and we are compelled to believe, and tremble, and pity, even while we shudder and turn away.

Crabbe, delighted to describe whatever other poets would have left undescribed, and regarded as utterly incapable of poetic description—an unpicturesque town, a flat, dreary sea-coast, a barren moorland. His characters are full-length pictures of the ugly, the mean, and the vicious, rarely relieved by contrast with better natures. It really seems imperative to the thoughtful reader to inquire how came this kind-hearted, pure-minded man to delineate this repulsive aspect of human nature. Much of Crabbe's idiosyncrasy arose from external circumstances. To understand him and his writings, those circum-

stances must be understood. He was born in humble life. His father, a man of strong mind and decent education, was the collector of the salt dues in Aldborough, or, more properly, Aldeburgh. The domestic scenes Crabbe's early youth was familiar with, were such as a severe and intemperate father, and a fond, sorrowing, suffering mother would present. He was the eldest child of six in that poor home. The violence of the father and the anguish of the poor mother were not without their effect on the sensitive observant boy. They aroused, if they did not implant, that mingled sternness and pity that blend so strangely in his poems. Nature, also, showed him her least genial aspect. His native town (wonderfully improved since his boyhood) lies along a low line of coast, without rock or headland to break the monotony; while landward, behind the little town, bleak sterile plains extend for miles. Trees, unless of some peculiarly hardy kinds, cannot live on those sandy moors swept by the fierce east winds that so often traverse the German Ocean. In Crabbe's boyhood the inhabitants were stern, and rude, and unyielding as their district — a colony of seafaring people, fishermen and pilots, and their families. Strange, that here, amid sorrow and violence, and rugged humanity, and sterile nature, a great poet should be born, and find nurture.

He inherited much of his mother's gentle heroism: and, notwithstanding the father's faults, he saw the superiority of his boy, and exerted himself to give him a better education than his circumstances actually warranted. He learned—a rare thing in that place and time—a little Latin and mathematics. His youth passed as an apprentice to a surgeon, first in the country, and afterwards at Woodbridge. This town has a pleasant country round, and here it was Crabbe's good fortune to become acquainted with Mary Elmy, who, long years after, became his wife. Of course he wrote poetry then, and the praise of Mary Elmy stimulated him. She helped him too, by judicious counsels, in many subordinate matters; his handwriting, mean and bad before, took form and clearness from her strictures.

While an apprentice at Woodbridge, he found, in Mr. Punchard of Ipswich, a publisher for his first poem. And the readers of his life, who know the domestic sorrows that he endured from his father's intemperate habits, will not be surprised that this first effort was called "*Inebriety*."

"See! Inebriety! her wand she waves,  
 And lo! her pale, and lo! her purple slaves!  
 Sots in embroidery, and sots in crape,  
 Of every order, station, rank, and shape:  
 The king, who nods upon his rattle throne;  
 The staggering peer, to midnight revel prone;

The slow-tongued bishop, and the deacon sly,  
 The humble pensioner, and gowmsman dry;  
 The proud, the mean, the selfish, and the great,  
 Swell the dull throng, and stagger into state."

There are some strong satires of the clergy in this poem, which, if Crabbe had been judged and punished with half the severity that many young poets have since endured, would have effectually prevented him from entering the sacred calling, and settling down in quiet comfort under his laurels.

But medicine and surgery Crabbe detested; and he had the mortification to return to Aldborough without any chance of making his way in the pursuit to which some years had been devoted. This was the crowning misery of his youth; for his father murmured, and his mother mourned, and the thoughtless laughed. At length, after some years of unsuccessful toil in his native place, at the age of twenty-five, he took his poems to London in the hope of finding a patron or a publisher, and there suffered agonies of want and suspense that might have driven a less patient spirit to the fate of Chatterton. In the crisis of his suffering he wrote to Burke. That great man, busy as he was, found time to read the stranger's poems, invited him to his house, introduced him to parties that could serve him, and, it might be said, completely rescued him from impending ruin.

The lines that particularly arrested Burke's attention, and convinced him that Crabbe was a true poet, are the following: —

“ Here wand'ring long, amid these frowning fields,  
 I sought the simple life that nature yields;  
 Rapine, and wrong, and fear usurp'd her place,  
 And a bold, artful, surly, savage race;  
 Who, only skill'd to take the finny tribe,  
 The yearly dinner, and septennial bribe,  
 Wait on the shore, and, as the waves run high,  
 On the tost vessel bend their eager eye,  
 Which to their coast directs its vent'rous way,  
 Theirs, or the ocean's, miserable prey.

As on their neighbouring beach yon swallows stand,  
 And wait for favouring winds to leave the land;  
 While still for flight the ready wing is spread:  
 So waited I the favouring hour, and fled;  
 Fled from these shores, where guilt and rapine reign,  
 And cried, Ah! hapless they who still remain;  
 Who still remain to hear the ocean roar,  
 Whose greedy waves devour the lessening shore\*;  
 Till some fierce tide, with more imperious sway,  
 Sweeps the low hut and all it holds away;  
 When the sad tenant weeps from door to door,  
 And begs a poor protection from the poor.”

Apart from the undoubted merit of Crabbe's faithful and pungent genius, two circumstances certainly favoured him. Chatterton's dreadful

\* The sea, within the memory of man, has so encroached on Aldborough as to have entirely altered the structure of the town, and devoured one street.

death, the indignation Horace Walpole's heartless conduct had excited, in neglecting the poor youth, and then insulting him, made the sorrows and the claims of genius more impressive. This is manifest from the fact, that some personal friends of Crabbe, whose hospitality he shared, used often in his hearing to speak of Chatterton as if giving a deprecating alarmed hint of their fear, lest another young poet should also perish. Burke, with his warm large heart, was very unlikely ever to act as Horace Walpole had done, but yet the solemn remembrance of such a tragedy must have had its influence.

The other favourable circumstance was the fact that Dr. Johnson, the then arbiter of morals and of taste, took a gloomy view of human life. Idealising poverty, poetising it, by changing all its darker tints, he detested; and his mind was instantly struck when Crabbe's "Village" presented the poor in stern truthfulness, entirely untinged with romance. The vigour and fidelity pleased him. His praise was fame.

Subsequently Crabbe entered the church, became domestic chaplain to the Duke of Rutland, married his early love, the faithful noble girl whose kind cheerful letters encouraged him to hope in the darkest hour, and with her enjoyed many years of uninterrupted domestic retirement and happiness. Twenty-two years passed, and

no new work came from that vigorous pen; and so quietly did he live, that the public, even while reading his poems, fancied him dead. Then, after that long interval, he again entered the list, and his "Borough," "Tales of the Hall," and other poems were hailed with delight by those who loved his racy homely truth. Many great poets had arisen in the interval, public taste had changed and been modified, but still he found that he had an admiring and increasing audience. He survived the companion of his youth and maturity many years, and died at Trowbridge in 1832, at the good old age of seventy-seven.

His bust, erected in the church of his native town, represents a countenance in which the brows are stern, the forehead and mouth benevolent. It is just the face imagination would assign to "the Hogarth of Poets."

There can be no doubt that the influence of Pope is to be traced in the measured verse and pointed description of Crabbe. He has been called "Pope in worsted stockings." It raises our estimate of Pope as a poet, to find that not only rhyming moralists and servile imitators formed themselves on his model, but that great original minds, like Crabbe, and still later Byron and Campbell, were imbued by his principles of composition, and emulated the faultless cadence of his verse.

But a gentler spirit and a more tuneful nature



were destined to move the great heart of the people in reference to poetry, and to create a complete reform of the coldness, brilliancy, and mannerisms, that had too long prevailed.

Truly there needed a reform in poetry. Domestic sympathies, familiar scenes, fireside joys, healthy hearty love of nature even, were rarely considered themes for poetry. In England and Scotland, towards the end of the century, there arose two bards, William Cowper and Robert Burns, who corrected the false and artificial taste of the age by returning to truth and nature.

Burns, the noble peasant bard,

“ Who walked in glory and in joy,  
Behind his plough upon the mountain side,”

was the very greatest in lyric flow, wild fervour, and natural description, of all uneducated poets. He wrote from the strong constraint of nature, untrammelled with rules of composition or poetic models. His “Cotter’s Saturday Night” (in the Spenserian stanza that his countrymen Thomson and Beattie had been the first to revive) is one of the most exquisite and yet just pictures of the beauty of holiness in the poor man’s home that has ever been delineated ; his “Twa Dogs,” one of the very best specimens of keen but good-humoured satire on the heartlessness of fashionable life ; while his lyrics and odes have been considered to

equal, if not surpass, the best in any language. The passionate tenderness that welled up in that deep heart sprang like a fountain, and overflowed in verse.

A sketch can do no justice to so sad a history as pertains to Scotland's most gifted son. It is an eternal stigma on the men in power at that time, that they both humiliated and neglected Burns. The office of an exciseman! was what they bestowed on this sublime genius. He died comparatively young (at thirty-seven); but his name dwells in every kindly memory as intimately as *his songs dwell on every tuneful tongue*; and the deep tragedy of his life will arouse sorrow and indignation as long as true hearts respond to generous emotions.

Cowper is not only an elegant and great, but a truly Christian poet. His poems exercise as well as delight the mind; they demand attentive reading, and they repay the student by the fine sense, the varied illustration, the close reasoning, as much as the play of fancy and the grace of expression in which they abound.

It is remarkable in the history of Cowper that, though an elegant scholar and always fond of literature, he arrived at middle age before he ventured to send forth his poems to the world. Except a few papers to a periodical (*The Connoisseur*) he did not write for publication; and

when his first volume of poems appeared (1782), he was fifty-one years of age. Ease, copiousness, and diligence were, however, equally with higher requisites, his endowments. In 1784 his second and most popular volume, containing *The Task*, appeared, and his fame as the greatest moral poet of his age was fully established. The exceeding beauty of "The Task" has made many readers rather neglect the preceding volume; but the fine poems on the Christian graces—Faith, Hope, and Charity, the sound reasoning and keen sarcasm in "The Progress of Error," in "Truth," and "Table-Talk," cannot fail to have the very best effect on every reader's mind. Occasionally poetry enervates by its very sweetness; it carries the mind on smoothly, and lulls it like the soft flow of a full and tranquil stream. Cowper's verse invigorates, suggests, arouses. He never sacrifices sense to sound; never charms the ear at the expense of the judgment. Cowper fully understood and fulfilled the poet's mission, that of reforming the taste and correcting the follies of his age.

Though of delicate temperament from childhood, a nervous invalid during his whole life, with frequent attacks of deep depression of spirits, and haunted by one insane idea, that he—humble fervent believer as he was! was excluded from the covenant of grace; yet he kept his harassing gloom, his mournful delusion, out of his poems,

and gave the loveliest view of the gladdening influence of religion. "True piety is cheerful as the day," is a sentiment that has often won young hearts to "consider their ways and be wise."

With all his melancholy, what a fine vein of genuine innocent wit and mirth occasionally pervaded his mind, and gushed freely forth in his verse! Very difficult in all our literature would it be to find such a piece of hearty English pleasantry as "John Gilpin;" mirth so innocent, wit so free from levity — a full, hearty, glad laugh, without one discordant note. John, his careful wife, their family party, the calendrer, the horse, the waiter with his bribe of half-a-crown to catch the unwilling horseman, the turnpike-men, the commotion along the road, all pass in swift panorama before the mind; while the verse is so tripping and easy, that the reader is as unable to stop before arriving at the end as Gilpin himself was.

What delicate sarcasm is there in the "Law Case" between Nose and Eyes as to the ownership of the spectacles! Many lawsuits have been to the full as groundless, and the decisions as void of practical good sense.

Among his miscellaneous poems, all excellent, none conveys a healthier lesson in beautiful verse than this lovely fable

## THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOW-WORM.

" A nightingale, that all day long  
 Had cheer'd the village with his song,  
 Nor yet at eve his note suspended,  
 Nor yet when eventide was ended,  
 Began to feel, as well he might,  
 The keen demands of appetite ;  
 When, looking eagerly around,  
 He spied far off upon the ground,  
 A something shining in the dark,  
 And knew the glow-worm by his spark.  
 So, stooping down from hawthorn top,  
 He thought to put him in his crop.  
 The worm, aware of his intent,  
 Harangued him thus right eloquent :  
 ' Did you admire my lamp, quoth he,  
 As much as I your minstrelsy,  
 You would abhor to do me wrong,  
 As much as I to spoil your song ;  
 For 'twas the self-same power divine  
 Taught you to sing, and me to shine ;  
 That you with music, I with light,  
 Might beautify and cheer the night.'  
 The songster heard his short oration,  
 And warbling out his approbation,  
 Released him, as my story tells,  
 And found a supper somewhere else.

Hence jarring sectaries may learn  
 Their real interest to discern ;  
 That brother should not war with brother,  
 And worry and devour each other :  
 But sing and shine by sweet consent,  
 Till life's poor transient night is spent ;

Respecting in each other's case,  
 The gifts of nature and of grace.  
 Those Christians best deserve the name,  
 Who studiously make peace their aim ;  
 Peace, both the duty and the prize  
 Of him that creeps and him that flies."

Among the many poets who in the present day have done themselves honour by tributary verses to the memory of the gentle Cowper, none have written with a finer perception of the true cause of his melancholy (partial insanity), or a more tender reverence for his strange gloom, and loving gentleness, than Mrs. Barrett Browning, in her stanzas on

## COWPER'S GRAVE.

" It is a place where poets crown'd,  
 May feel the heart's decaying ;  
 It is a place where happy saints  
 May weep amid their praying :  
 Yet let the grief and humbleness  
 As low as silence languish ;  
 Earth surely now may give her calm  
 To whom she gave her anguish.

" O poets ! from a maniac's tongue  
 Was pour'd the deathless singing !  
 O Christians ! at your cross of hope  
 A hopeless hand was clinging !  
 O men ! this man in brotherhood,  
 Your many paths beguiling,  
 Groan'd inly while he taught you peace,  
 And died while you were smiling.

" And now, what time ye all may read,  
     Through dimming tears, his story —  
 How discord on the music fell,  
     And darkness on the glory ;  
 And how, when, one by one, sweet sounds  
     And wandering lights departed,  
 He wore no less a loving face,  
     Because so broken hearted.

" He shall be strong to sanctify  
     The poet's high vocation,  
 And bow the meekest Christian down  
     In meeker adoration ;  
 Nor ever shall he be in pain,  
     By wise or good forsaken ;  
 Nam'd softly, as the household name  
     Of one whom God hath taken.

" With sadness that is calm, not gloom,  
     I learn to think upon him ;  
 With meekness that is gratefulness  
     On God, whose heaven hath won him ;  
 Who suffer'd once the cloud of madness  
     Toward His love to blind him ;  
 But gently led the blind along  
     Where breeze and bird could find him ;

" And wrought within his shatter'd brain  
     Such quick poetic senses,  
 As hills have language for, and stars,  
     Harmonious influences !  
 The pulse of dew upon the grass,  
     His own did calmly number ;  
 And silent shadows from the trees  
     Fell o'er him like a slumber.

“ The very world, by God’s constraint,  
 From falsehood’s chill removing,  
 Its women and its men became,  
 Beside him, true and loving ;  
 And timid hares were drawn from woods,  
 To share his home caresses,  
 Uplooking to his human eyes  
 With sylvan tendernesses.

“ But while in blindness he remain’d,  
 Unconscious of the guiding,  
 And things provided came without  
 The sweet sense of providing,  
 He testified this solemn truth,  
 Though frenzy desolated,—  
 Nor man, nor nature satisfy,  
 Whom only God created !

“ Like a sick child, that knoweth not  
 His mother while she blesses,  
 And droppeth on his burning brow  
 The coolness of her kisses ;  
 That turns his fever’d eyes around,  
 ‘ My mother ! where’s my mother ? ’  
 As if such tender words and looks  
 Could come from any other !

“ The fever gone, with leaps of heart,  
 He sees her bending o’er him ;  
 Her face all pale with watchful love,—  
 The unwearied love she bore him !  
 Thus waken’d from the dream  
 His mother gave him ;  
 Beneath her sympathetic eyes,  
 Was his to save him !



“ Thus ! oh, not *thus* ! no type of earth  
 Could image that awaking,  
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant  
 Of seraphs round him breaking,  
 Or felt the new immortal throb  
 Of soul from body parted ;  
 But felt those eyes alone, and knew  
*My* Saviour ! *not* deserted !

“ Deserted ! who hath dreamt that when  
 The cross in darkness rested  
 Upon the victim’s hidden face,  
 No love was manifested ?  
 What frantic hands outstretch’d have e’er  
 The atoning drops averted ;  
 What tears have wash’d them from the soul,  
 That *one* should be deserted ?

“ Deserted ! God could separate  
 From his own essence rather ;  
 And Adam’s sins *have* swept between  
 The righteous Son and Father.  
 Yea ! once Immanuel’s orphan’d cry,  
 His universe hath shaken ;  
 It went up single, echoless,—  
 ‘ My God, I am forsaken ! ’

“ It went up from the holy’s lips,  
 Amid his lost creation,  
 That of the lost, no son should use,  
 Those words of desolation :  
 That earth’s worst phrenzies’ mazy scope  
 Should mar not hope’s fruition ;  
 And I, on Cowper’s grave, should see  
 His rapture in a vision ! ”

Though the eighteenth century, as regards general literature, was, through two-thirds of its extent, pervaded by a heartlessness that no brilliancy or wit could compensate, yet it must ever be remembered that during the early period of that age there were some pure and gifted minds that kindled into a bright flame the smouldering embers on the altar of truth. Some of the very best devotional poetry for general use that had appeared (with the exception of George Herbert's) was the product of that age. Addison had given his fine paraphrases of the 19th and of the 23rd Psalm; and many other poets, Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe more particularly, directing their minds to sacred song, had struck a full key-note. Dr. Watts, however, was the first to swell "the grand consummate harmony." He says of himself, with the extreme modesty that was a part of his character, "I make no pretences to the name of a poet, or a polite writer, in an age wherein so many superior souls shine, in their works, through the nation." It would be difficult now, if we set up Dr. Watts as the standard, to find the "superior souls" he speaks of.

Isaac Watts was born during troubled times—1674, the year that Milton died. His infant smiles had lighted up the gloom of the prison at Southampton, where his father was confined a brief period for refusing to conform. An anecdote is told of his

mother, when visiting her husband, resting herself at the door of the prison, with her infant in her arms. The child was unusually precocious, "lisp'd in numbers." His father was engaged in tuition, and the son, therefore, had every advantage of good instruction and example. He afterwards studied under competent teachers in Hampshire and London. In his nineteenth year he united with the Independent Church, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Thomas Rowe, his tutor. On his return to Southampton, while devoting himself to his studies with increased zeal, his taste was offended by the rugged version of Psalms that were used in public worship (probably written on the model of those that Hopkins and Sternhold had given in the reign of Edward VI.); and he composed some hymns, and made some paraphrases, for the use of the congregation, adding to them until their number was considerable, when his friends urged their publication. They were found to be greatly superior to any then in use, and that they were generally acceptable, is proved from the fact that they have formed the basis of all collections of psalms and hymns for Christian worship among all denominations from that time, and that many are completely interwoven and imbedded, as it were, with the language of devotion. His sacred songs are so well known, that we prefer quoting a poem on a different theme.

## FEW HAPPY MATCHES.

“ Say, mighty Love, and teach my song,  
To whom thy sweetest joys belong,  
And who the happy pairs,  
Whose yielding hearts and joining hands  
Find blessings twisted with their bands,  
To soften all their cares.

“ Not the wild herd of nymphs and swains  
That, thoughtless, fly into thy chains,  
As custom leads the way :  
If there be bliss without design,  
Ivies and oaks may grow and twine,  
And be as blest as they.

“ Nor sordid souls of earthly mould,  
Who, drawn by kindred charms of gold,  
To dull embraces move :  
So two rich mountains of Peru  
May rush to wealthy marriage too,  
And make a world of love.

“ Not the mad tribe that hell inspires  
With wanton flames ; those raging fires  
The purer bliss destroy :  
On Ætna's top let furies wed,  
And sheets of lightning dress the bed,  
T' improve the burning joy.

“ Not the dull pairs whose marble forms  
None of the melting passion warms,  
Can mingle hearts and hands :  
Logs of green wood, that quench the fire,  
Are married just like stoic souls,  
With osiers for their bands.

“ Not minds of melancholy strain  
 Still silent, or that still complain,  
 Can the dear bondage bless ;  
 As well may heavenly concerts spring  
 From two old lutes with ne'er a string,  
 Or none beside the bass.

“ Nor can the soft enchantments hold  
 Two jarring souls of angry mould,  
 The rugged and the keen :  
 Samson's young foxes might as well  
 In bonds of cheerful wedlock dwell,  
 With firebrands tied between.

“ Nor let the cruel fetters bind  
 A gentle to a savage mind ;  
 For love abhors the sight :  
 Loose the fierce tiger from the deer,  
 For native rage and native fear  
 Rise and forbid delight.

“ Two kindred souls alone must meet ;  
 'Tis friendship makes the bondage sweet,  
 And feeds their mutual loves :  
 Bright Venus, on her rolling throne,  
 Is drawn by gentlest birds alone,  
 And Cupids yoke the doves.”

Dr. Watts has justly been considered as “ the most universal scholar of his age,” cultivating every kind of learning. It is an interesting fact that he condescended to the minds of little children in his beautiful “ Hymns and Moral Songs,” and that, too, at a time when there were no precedents

for such a kind of writing in our language. He not only gave a variety and glow to devotional lyric poetry that it had not previously possessed, but he it was that led the van of that vast multitude of useful writers who devoted their talents to the benefit of youth,—seeking less the applause of genius than the good of society.

Previously to the time of Dr. Watts, as far as poems suitable to be sung at worship are concerned, the remark of a distinguished living poet is just: “Our good poets have seldom been good Christians, and our good Christians have seldom been good poets.”\* But since the time of Watts, the names of Young, Doddridge, Toplady, Cowper, John and Charles Wesley, and Heber, constitute a galaxy of stars.

Of Young it may be said, though he wrote an *Essay on Lyric Poetry*, that he did not appear himself to have excelled in it. His odes are diffuse, laboured, and bear no comparison with his great work, the “*Night Thoughts*,” of which it has been finely said, “They exhibited a very wide display of original poetry variegated with deep reflections and striking allusions,—a wilderness of thought, in which the fertility of fancy scatters flowers of every hue and colour. Their excellence is not exactness, but copiousness; par-

\* James Montgomery.

ticular lines are not to be regarded; the power is in the whole. The charm, however, which extends through the whole, is the beautiful and consistent piety which shines in every page, and constitutes the burden of every song."

To return, however, to Dr. Watts, justly the leading mind among the devotional lyric poets of the century. It is his praise to have excelled equally in prose compositions. His work "*On the Improvement of the Mind*" is one of the most valuable books in our language. His "Logic," though greatly superseded by admirable modern works, yet, doubtless, led the way to the production of the class of books on that subject now so much esteemed. In every thing he undertook the originality of his mind was manifest, while his life was a beautiful comment on the Gospel. He entered on the work of the ministry at the age of twenty-four, as assistant to Dr. Chauncy, of Mark Lane. He was a tutor in the family of Sir John Hartopp, bart., of Stoke Newington. From thence he removed to the house of Sir Thomas and Lady Abney, and continued with them till his death (1748), a period of thirty-six years. During his pastorate of fifty years, he was frequently the subject of ill health, and long required the aid of a co-pastor; but his labours and studies were unremitted. Three years before his death, Dr. Watts assisted, by advice and

sympathy, to usher into the world a very important work,—“The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,” by Dr. Doddridge.

Few characters are more interesting and delightful than that of Philip Doddridge, born 1702.

The sweet story of his feeble infancy, of his mother's teaching him Bible lessons from the Dutch tiles round their fireplace, are well known. He was destined early to lose, but never to forget, that good mother. An orphan in his youth, losing both father and mother before his fifteenth year, God was with him, and blessed him. Friends were raised up. He was placed at school at St. Albans, where, in his sixteenth or seventeenth year, he joined the Church under the pastoral care of the learned and excellent Samuel Clark, who proved to him a most liberal and faithful friend. He received from the Duchess of Bedford an offer of patronage if he would repair to either university, preparatory to entering the Church of England. This offer, though it excited his utmost gratitude, he could not conscientiously comply with. He entered a dissenting academy at Kibworth, in Leicestershire, the tutor being Dr. Jennings. Here he was domesticated with a delightful family, and early formed an attachment for the only daughter of his tutor; which, however, ultimately was broken off, the young lady afterwards marrying Mr.



Aikin, and becoming the mother of Mrs. Barbauld, and her no less celebrated brother, Dr. Aikin. It was on Mrs. Jennings, the wife of Doddridge's tutor, and the kind friend of the orphan student, that Mrs. Barbauld wrote those beautiful lines so expressive of the happy death of an aged Christian.

"'Tis past, dear venerable shade, farewell !  
 Thy blameless life thy peaceful death shall tell ;  
 Clear to the last thy setting orb has run,  
 Pure, bright and healthy, like a frosty sun :  
 And late old age, with hand indulgent, shed  
 Its mildest winter on thy favour'd head.  
 For heaven prolong'd her life to spread its praise,  
 And blest her with a patriarch's length of days.  
 The truest praise was hers,—a cheerful heart,  
 Prone to enjoy, and ready to impart.  
 An Israelite indeed, and free from guile,  
 She show'd that piety and age could smile.  
 Religion had her heart, her cares, her voice ;  
 'Twas her last refuge, as her earliest choice.  
 To holy Anna's spirit not more dear,  
 The church of Israel, and the house of prayer.  
 Her spreading offspring of the fourth degree  
 Fill'd her fond arms and clasp'd her trembling knee.  
 Matur'd at length for some more perfect scene,  
 Her hopes all bright, her prospects all serene ;  
 Each part of life sustain'd with equal worth,  
 And not a wish left unfulfill'd on earth ;  
 Like a tir'd traveller with sleep oppress,  
 Within her children's arms she dropp'd to rest."

The influence of such a woman and her daughter

on Doddridge in his youth must have had its effect in forming his character.

This great man recommended religion by his habitual cheerfulness. He was an early riser from his youth, and used to say by that means he had had ten years more of life. He entered on the work of the ministry at the age of twenty-one, and, after some removals, settled in Northampton, 1729, and was chosen tutor of a dissenting college for preparing young men for the ministry, that had been instituted by Dr. Watts, Rev. Mr. Saunders, and other nonconformists. This institution soon became justly celebrated.

Dr. Doddridge, both from experience and inclination, was admirably adapted to write for the young; and his addresses "On the Education of Children," his "Principles of the Christian Religion," and his "Sermons to Young People," were eminently useful at a time when books for young persons were both scarce and inferior. Dr. Watts and Dr. Doddridge have the merit of originating a better class of juvenile literature in our land. The great fame, however, of this master in Israel rests on his "Family Expositor," and his Scripture translations and expositions. Of these works, whatever may be the difference of opinion on the sentiments, all admire the candour and the ability.

As a letter writer, Doddridge approaches in



excellence very nearly to Cowper, — the same playful ease and graceful simplicity. What can exceed the perfect glow of happiness in the following letter to his wife, who was absent for the benefit of her health: —

“I hope, my dear, that you will not be offended when I tell you that I am,—what I hardly thought it possible without a miracle that I should have been without you,—very easy and happy without you. My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure; and seem short because they are so delightful. It may seem strange to say it, but really so it is: I hardly feel that I want anything. I often think of you, and pray for you, and bless God on your account, and please myself with the hope of many comfortable days, and weeks, and years with you; yet I am not at all anxious about your return, or indeed about anything else. And the reason,—the great and sufficient reason—is, that I have more of the presence of God with me than I remember ever to have enjoyed in any one month of my life. He enables me to live for him, and to live with him. When I awake in the morning, which is always before it is light, I address myself to Him, and converse with Him, speak to Him while I am lighting my candle and putting on my clothes; and have often more delight before I come out of my chamber, though it be hardly a quarter of an hour after my awaking, than I have enjoyed for whole days, or perhaps weeks, of my life. He meets me in my study, in secret, in family devotions. It is pleasant to read, pleasant to compose, pleasant to converse with my friends at home; pleasant to visit those abroad—the poor, the sick; pleasant to write letters of necessary business, by which any good can be done; pleasant to go out and preach the gospel to poor souls, of which some are thirsting for it, and others dying without it; pleasant in

the week day to think how near another Sabbath is ; but oh, much, much more pleasant to think how near eternity is, and how short the journey through this wilderness, and that it is but a step from earth to heaven."

Two or three years after he wrote this letter he published the "Rise and Progress;" the worthy fruit from such a deep root of happiness.

Dr. Johnson says, that Dr. Doddridge was the author of one of the finest epigrams in the language. The motto of his family was *Dum vivimus vivamus*, which he thus paraphrased:—

"Live while you live, the *epicure* would say,  
And seize the pleasures of the present day :  
Live while you live, the sacred *preacher* cries,  
And give to God each moment as it flies.  
Lord, in my views let both united be,  
I live to pleasure when I live to thee."

In general literature and criticism no name of the last century, or probably of any age, was superior to that of Dr. Johnson. He classified our language by his admirable dictionary,—a work that differs from all others of the kind in the circumstance that it shows not merely the etymology of a word, but the sense in which various writers have used it. Hence it is a dictionary of quotations as well as words. There had been good English dictionaries before the time of Dr. Johnson, but none that, by examples from the greatest writers, gave such a knowledge of the

delicacies and niceties of the language. This laborious work was necessarily the employment of many years. No man was more diligent during his whole life than Dr. Johnson. The independence of his spirit was equalled by his industry. His noble letter to Lord Chesterfield, who had professed to be interested in his great work, the dictionary, and whose interest evaporated in mere profession, is a fine comment on the aid that rank too often gave to genius, and justifies our former remarks on the humiliations attendant on the old system of patronage.\*

“Seven years, my lord, have now past since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. . . . Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it, till I am solitary and cannot impart it †, till I am known and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing

\* See page 205.

† Alluding to the death of his wife, which had occurred in the interval.

that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself."

Dr. Johnson's "Rambler" was at the end of the last century what the "Spectator" had been at the beginning; it had, however, neither the cheerfulness nor the versatility of its predecessor. Dr. Johnson, as a moralist, was decidedly gloomy; ever presenting the disappointments and mistakes rather than the joys and successes of life. All his views took a tint from the melancholy of his own character, and the deep but honest prejudices of his mind. No man ever expressed opinions more authoritatively, as if he completely settled every question. His life of Milton, in his "*Lives of the Poets*," is a memorable instance of this summary method. In the midst of much severity of manner, Dr. Johnson had a kind and benevolent heart; and at a time when religion had become mere formalism with multitudes, the decidedly moral tone of his writings essentially served the interests of outward propriety.

In standard historical literature, the eighteenth century was peculiarly rich. The three great historians, Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, notwithstanding very grave faults of opinion, and strong prejudices, by their admirable style of narration have undoubtedly the merit of rendering a previously uninviting study interesting, not merely to the scholar, but to the general reader. Hume

“England,” Robertson’s “Discovery of America,” and his “Life of Mary Queen of Scots,” and Gibbon’s magnificent work “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” opened up treasures of knowledge, and suggested inquiries that have occupied other investigators from that time to the present, and at length have completely popularised the study of history.

## CHAP. XV.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (*continued*).—IMAGINATIVE WRITINGS.

WE have mentioned Daniel De Foe as establishing a periodical that gave the hint of a similar work to Addison and Steele. He was also the founder of a class of very influential writings, that have been very differently estimated by various critics. "Robinson Crusoe" is undoubtedly the first popular specimen of the modern English novel.

This department of literature is intended to combine in prose composition the peculiarities of the epic and the dramatic forms; narrative and dialogue elucidating a story, and developing characters. This kind of writing was very partially known to the ancients; that is, in the amplified form in which we have it; though the mode of teaching a truth through the medium of a fable, is as old as the work of education itself. Thus, Æsop's Fables taught moral lessons in the guise of fanciful stories about animals, &c.; and tradition tells of many works of fiction of classic antiquity which were lost during the dark ages.

The monkish legends, containing the



saints, most of them fabulous, were the novels of the early times, and were open to the charge of complete falsehood, because they were not given forth as the work of the imagination, but imposed upon the credulity of the people by pretending to narrate facts. After the crusades, we had many wild and wonderful fictions from the East, less liable to the charge of deception, because, from their supernatural machinery of enchantment and necromancy, they were palpably efforts of the imagination. The romances of chivalry were equally wild and improbable. There was a collection of all sorts of fanciful legends and stories, called "*Gesta Romanorum*," that was a great favourite with readers for amusement during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the narratives of this book Shakspeare found many of the stories on which he constructed his dramas. "King Lear and his three Daughters" was a legend in this collection. Sir Thomas More's "Utopia" was a marvellous work of invention for his age, and a model of the philosophic fiction.

We have shown that the imagination bloomed forth in poetry in the Elizabethan age. More than a hundred minor poets, besides the great names of Spenser, Shakspeare, and Ben Jonson, gave out graceful fancies in their varied verse. But there was nothing analogous to the modern work of fiction.

Dunlop, in his "History of Fiction," places Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" at the head, and names him as the originator, of the new style. But that work undoubtedly, judged both by the intention of the writer and the effects produced on the reader, cannot, without violence to our feelings, be classed with ordinary fictions, however excellent. It occupies a place alone in literature: in which a sanctified imagination has used the experiences of the Christian life, and wrought them up in a form so striking and peculiar, that the whole doctrinal and experimental basis of religious truth is presented to the reader. Bunyan's book is a scriptural guide to the world to come. The highest aim of all other imaginative works is to teach some moral lesson as to this world, or to treat graphically some historical era or incident.

It is much more rational to consider Daniel De Foe, the author of "Robinson Crusoe," as the founder of the modern English novel.

Four writers of this department of literature arose during the first half of the last century — Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, and Sterne. The first wrote during his youth, and described with fidelity to nature, but with great laxity of moral principle, and defiance of all decorum, the manners of actual life among dissipated young men, country squires good and bad, and ladies, some

pedantic and others illiterate, but none of very pure moral principles or much mental power. The aim of the writer was to amuse rather than amend his reader, and the coarseness of his books necessarily restricted them entirely to male readers.

While Fielding has been described as an observer of the characters of human life, his contemporary, Smollet, was a describer of its various eccentricities. With great wit and a racy humour, the absence of all delicacy made his writings, notwithstanding their great intellectual power, revolting to all right-minded persons.

Sterne (a clergyman) aimed at introducing the Pathetic into this class of literature, and made more direct and tender appeals to the feelings of his readers. His writings are equally open to the charge of immorality and coarseness, mixed up with a great deal of sentimentality, that was rather likely to render them more dangerous, because they thereby interested female readers. His well-known and beautiful story of "Le Fevre" is the best, because the purest, of his fictions. But it is melancholy to think that a clergyman should have left such evidence of his incompetency for his sacred office, and should have so aided and fostered the follies of his age.

Richardson merits a rather different notice from any of his contemporaries, in the art of fiction.

He was a professed moralist. Born towards the close of the previous century (1689), he grew up amid female society, read much aloud such works as were likely to please his female friends, and was, even in boyhood, employed to write their letters of sentiment or business,—a significant proof of the low state of female education among the decent portion of the trading class at that time. He was reared a printer, and cultivated his epistolary abilities, without, however, publishing anything until he was nearly fifty years of age. He then wrote three voluminous novels\* ; two representing the trials and temptations of woman in humble and in elevated life, and the triumph of purity, modesty, and intelligence, over coarseness, levity, and artifice. The third was an attempt to delineate a perfect gentleman, in the best sense of the word ; but a sort of tedious stiffness rendered this work far less interesting and popular than the two first. Many of the letters in these works were perfect models of easy, elegant composition, and unexceptionable as to moral excellence.

Richardson's works were such an improvement in moral purpose on those novels that had previously appeared, that they were immediately approved. Grave and learned men, and eminent

\* "Pamela," "Clarissa Harlowe," "Sir Charles Grandison."

divines, wrote letters of thanks to Richardson, for having made amusement the vehicle of instruction, and purified a class of literature that had such attractions for young readers.

Modern opinion has somewhat altered that verdict. A German critic calls Richardson's writings "moralising immoral novels."\* And Dr. Watts, in a letter to Richardson, who had wished his opinion, said, the ladies of his circle "could not read the books without blushing often at their contents." In order to describe the triumphs of virtue, Richardson too often dwelt on the details of vice, until the whole structure of his stories was offensive to good taste and purity.

Nothing is more amusing, as a picture of society in the last century, than the letters addressed by ladies to Richardson. They adored him as a champion, and worshipped him as an idol.

Without any pretension of instructing society, Goldsmith wrote a story that, in popularity, has survived and surpassed all the others, and is read by every succeeding generation with constant delight—"The Vicar of Wakefield." Except "Robinson Crusoe," no book of that class has secured so extensive a reputation, not only in our own, but in foreign lands. It was undoubtedly the first of that large class,—healthy domestic stories.

\* Schlosser's History of the Literature of the Eighteenth Century, vol. ii. p. 60.

It has been translated into every European language; and it has also been eminently suggestive of subjects for painters. There is a picture of some scene in the "Vicar of Wakefield" in almost every exhibition of paintings; while its beauty, simplicity, and truth to nature, have rendered it incomparable as a delightful domestic story. Whatever department of literature Goldsmith touched he embellished by the pure graces of his natural, unaffected style. His poetry has the polish of Pope without his artificiality; his prose the elegance of Addison with more force and genuineness. No writer of the past century has been so interesting to the people of the present, both in England and America. The biography of Goldsmith has been thrice written in a comprehensive and attractive form within these few years\*; and amid the competitions of the essayists, poets, novelists, and dramatists of the present age, his works retain their place in public favour to an extent that no author in the departments of general literature can boast. Much of this is due to his undoubted genius, his great but unpretending knowledge, and yet more to his guileless spirit and kindly nature, which gleams out in all his writings like a clear flame through a crystal lamp. It is very probable that the prison teachings of the good

\* Prior's, Washington Irving's, and Forster's Lives of Goldsmith.

vicar may have suggested thoughts to men in power that have aided in the work of prison reform.

The question very naturally and properly arises as to the utility of works of fiction.

Two classes err with reference to them—those who reject them entirely, and those who read them exclusively and indiscriminately. The first comprehends a large section both of the religious and the scientific world. The former, from a sacred reverence for truth, and a conscientious jealousy lest its sanctity should be weakened, dislike all that is not fact; apparently forgetting that truth soars into a higher region than mere fact, and that a matter may be true hypothetically and metaphysically that is not true literally. Teaching by similitude makes a matter more plain to many minds; and putting a supposititious case to elucidate or prove an argument, is the ordinary course whenever we would embody abstract truths and present examples. In this way, the imagination may be made more serviceable than any faculty we possess, in influencing the moral sentiments. The scientific objectors to imaginative literature hold that, as life is short, and the world full even yet of unexplored mysteries and wonders, the real and the actual, rather than the ideal and fanciful, should occupy the attention. It is, however, a memorable fact, that the imagination

has been the great auxiliary to science; that the mere plodder, however useful in heaping up and arranging a store of facts, has not been the man that has invented and extended the boundaries of knowledge. Columbus, Galileo, Kepler, were all highly imaginative minds; and in modern times, James Watt and Sir Humphry Davy were distinguished for the possession of a vivid imagination, that led them into speculations by which they often arrived unexpectedly at truth.

The second class is undoubtedly much larger than the first, and their error more fatal. No department of literature (if we except that which is of divine authority) can be read continuously and indiscriminately without injury, more or less, to the mind—by the cultivation of one faculty without reference to others. A constant reading of history, without regard to the lessons to be gained from the narrative, and to the peculiarities and prejudices of each historian, would end in filling the mind with a contradictory jumble of facts that taught falsehoods more effectually than any fiction. A constant reading of poetry would tend to enervate the mind, and make it more dependent on harmonious sounds than abstract truths. Biography, though the most useful, fascinating, and generally applicable of any kind of reading, may, by being perpetually indulged, stimulate rather than strengthen, and lead the reader to depend



on the mere narrative, and not to investigate and apply the lesson of the life. Even moral essays and controversies, perpetually and exclusively perused, would but create a dogmatic spirit, and perhaps fatigue and perplex the mind, until it wandered "in endless mazes lost;" while every one knows that a constant habit of discursive reading of periodicals tends to confusion and superficiality. But there is much less temptation to exclusiveness and voracity in reading any other department of literature, and far less danger to the mind, than from continuous application to works of fiction. In the present day this department of literature has so improved in purpose and in execution, that the arguments once used by thoughtful minds will no longer apply. The objection that yet remains in full force against young persons, more especially, reading such works indiscriminately, is, that they indispose, and in some cases incapacitate, the mind from regular study and attention to standard literature. The fascination of a narrative and the stimulus of a catastrophe are necessary to attract and fix the attention; and any work that has not that peculiarity is not likely to prove interesting. Dryness and tediousness are the defects alleged against works of sterling merit by the class of readers who have over-excited their minds by brilliant description and gorgeous story. Another great

and grave defect is, that these works create an appetite they cannot satisfy. A morbid craving is excited, that consumes time and weakens intellect in its gratification. To read much and know nothing clearly—to have read whole libraries, and have nothing to rely on as correct, or to quote as fact, is the ordinary condition of the voracious, indiscriminate novel reader.

To read a well-written work of fiction, of a strictly moral and healthy tendency, to exhilarate and refresh the mind, to elucidate a point of ethics, or a theory of society, or to get a graphic panoramic view of the manners of past times, is a just and reasonable use of works of imagination.

In the present day we have historical, metaphysical, philosophical, conventional, ethical, national, humorous, and domestic fictions, contributed by writers male and female of the very highest reputation.

In the admirable essay with which Mrs. Barbauld prefaces “The Correspondence of Richardson” which she edited, she says, very justly, —

“It is not easy to say why the poet should have so high a place allotted him in the Temple of Fame, and the romance writer so low a one as, in the general estimation, he is confined to; for his dignity as a writer has by no means been measured by the pleasure he affords to his readers; yet the invention of a story, the choice of proper incidents, the ordonnance of the plan, the exhibition of the character, the gradual development of a plot, occasional beauties of de-

scription, and, above all, the power exercised over the reader's heart, by filling it with the successive emotions of love, pity, joy, anguish, transport, or indignation, together with the grave impressive moral resulting from the whole, imply talents of the highest order, and command our warmest praise. There is no walk in which taste and genius have more distinguished themselves, or in which virtuous and noble sentiments have come out with greater lustre."\*

It is creditable to public taste in the present day that the rapid trash, the prosy narrations of impossibilities, the delicate distresses and sentimental perplexities, that came out in five or seven volumes at the end of the last and beginning of the present century, have almost entirely disappeared. Female education, registrations, railways, and a penny post, have done away with nearly all the delectable mysteries of nocturnal elopements in post-chaises, forced marriages, foundlings the heirs to titles and estates, and wealthy distant uncles, unapproachable by roads or letters, who yet always arrived at the right time; in short, the old machinery of romance is broken up and done with; and something that does not outrage probability and that elucidates the real, whether good or evil, is energetically demanded and supplied.

\* Correspondence of Richardson, edited by Letitia Barbauld, vol. i. p. 10.

## CHAP. XVI.

## FEMALE WRITERS OF THE LAST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, AND THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT.

MRS. ELIZABETH ROWE, the Philomela of Prior, the friend also of Dr. Watts, was unquestionably, as far as elegant literature is concerned, the most popular female writer at the commencement of the eighteenth century; her virtues being fully as admirable as her talents, and her life the best comment on her principles. We have already adverted to Mrs. Catherine Cockburne, the disciple and defender of Locke. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the brilliant and versatile, and, alas! the capricious and eccentric, was the most celebrated woman of her time, though her writings were not published until after her death. Yet the praises of men of genius; the poems that now and then crept into periodicals, and were known to be hers; her travels in the East, a region previously unvisited by an Englishwoman; her wit and vivacity; the independence of mind that induced her at all hazards of opposition and ridicule to introduce inoculation for the small-pox, all combined to render her the "observed of all observers."

As a friend of men of genius, and a patron of literature, Lady Hertford, afterwards Duchess of Somerset, deserves honoured remembrance. She aided Thomson, and he in return dedicated his "Spring" to her in stanzas not only exquisitely beautiful, but appropriate to the sweetness and liberality of her nature: —

"Come, gentle Spring! ethereal mildness, come!  
 And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,  
 While music wakes around, veil'd in a shower  
 Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend.  
 Oh, Hertford! fitted or to shine in courts  
 With unaffected grace, or walk the plain  
 With innocence and meditation joined  
 In soft assemblage, listen to my song,  
 Which thy own season paints, when nature all  
 Is blooming and benevolent like thee."

To this lady's spirited intercession with Queen Caroline, wife of George II. the persecuted poet, Savage, owed his life. He had been accused of murder; and his unnatural mother, the Countess of Macclesfield\*, did all she could to prejudice the Queen against him. Lady Hertford, who was acquainted with the whole particulars, determined

\* Richard Savage was the unacknowledged son of this odious woman. He discovered the secret of his birth, and endeavoured, but in vain, to awaken some sympathy in her callous heart. Her malignity was increased tenfold, and she actually prejudiced the queen's mind by falsely accusing Savage of having attempted to murder her.

that the Queen should know the truth. She obtained an audience, and the life of Savage was spared. This lady was also the friend of Dr. Watts and Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe.

The latter half of the century was, however, far more prolific in female writers than the former. A new kind of literary association sprang up, copied, it must be admitted, from the French, and now chiefly remembered from the fact of its having been the means of introducing some women of superior attainments to celebrated men of the time, whose praise was fame.

Mrs. Montagu, a lady of fortune, and a connection by marriage of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, had resided in Paris, and adopted the then prevailing fashion of holding literary assemblies. On her return to England she introduced the plan; and her house, on stated nights, became the resort of distinguished persons of both sexes. Here might be seen the titled dame, who conferred patronage and expected praise; the young literary aspirant; the men of established repute, who loved to unbend among those who eagerly listened, lauded, and repeated their sayings; and the quiet observers of human character, who could not but be pleased at the mingled wit and wisdom, pretence and folly, that variegated the scene. At Mrs. Montagu's, however, literary ease, either in dress or manner, was not practised;

there was stately attire and dignified ceremonial : the deportment of the highly intellectual hostess was full of courtly grace, and influenced the others. The word *bas bleu* (blue stocking) was applied to these gatherings, though not first at Mrs. Montagu's. Mrs. Vesey, a lady of similar tastes but far smaller fortune, opened her house for literary assemblings every Tuesday evening during the London season, and here greater freedom prevailed. According to Madame D'Arblay, a foreign gentleman, who was invited, once apologised that his dress was unsuitable, when Mrs. Vesey replied, "Pho! don't mind dress; come in your blue stockings." This term was caught up, in a sort of mistake, by the foreigner, and came to be applied to each house, and perhaps more commonly at length to Mrs. Montagu's, who was called "the queen of the blues." Madame D'Arblay observes, —

"But while the same *bas bleu* appellation was given to these two houses of rendezvous, neither that nor even the same associates could render them similar. Their grandeur or their simplicity, their magnitude or their diminutiveness, were by no means the principal cause of this difference; it was far more attributable to the lady presidents than to their abodes. For though they instilled not their characters into their visitors, their characters bore so large a share in their visitors'

reception and accommodation, as to influence materially the turn of the discourse and the humour of the parties at their houses."

To these two literary gatherings, in process of time, a third was added. Mrs. Thrale's house at Streatham, in consequence of the celebrity of her distinguished guest, Dr. Johnson—who became an almost constant inmate—was much frequented; and if not so absolute as to fashion and taste, was fully as intellectual.

These three ladies, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, and Mrs. Thrale, were considered equal as arbiters of taste, and friends of genius. The first and the last are, however, the best known by their writings.

Mrs. Montagu, who had received all the advantages the most liberal education and ample fortune could command, wrote "An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare," against the attacks of Voltaire, the French sceptical poet, who misunderstood and depreciated our national bard. So much has been written—finely and judiciously written—elucidating and commenting on Shakspeare, that in our days Mrs. Montagu's defence reads rather tame and laboured. It was, however, a good service that she rendered at a time when there was a far greater appreciation of artificial and superficial writings, than of the bard who unveiled the inmost recesses of the heart.



Mrs. Thrale, who had associated so much with Dr. Johnson that she might be considered his pupil, has left many evidences of her brilliancy and vivacity. Her poem "The Three Warnings," is as good a piece of serious pleasantry as any in the language; and her two volumes of "British Synonymes," without any pretension to learned method and systematic arrangement, supply most agreeably interesting, and often sparkling, essays on the nature and power of analogous words. The book was written to aid foreigners in obtaining a knowledge of the niceties of our language, and has the merit of being one of the liveliest books about mere words that we possess. Mrs. Thrale was accused—as indeed every learned lady of that age was—of pedantry; but while her classic knowledge necessarily appears in reference to such a subject as the powers and limits, the conformities and contrasts, of English words, nothing can be more unaffected, and even playful, than the style. And while abler and more comprehensive works on synonymous words have superseded hers, the modern reader who looks into her volumes is repaid by the sprightly colloquial flow of the style, and the grace that adorns what otherwise would be a dry subject. She is chiefly known as a writer by the name of her second husband, Piozzi.

While these ladies had the merit, or good for-

tune, to open their houses to the reception of literary visitors, particularly of their own sex, many who frequented their coterie became far more celebrated than themselves.

The studious and good Elizabeth Carter, the translator of Epictetus, sometimes appeared at these assemblies. However instructive her writings might be, her example as a diligent student is far more valuable to her countrywomen. The daughter of a country clergyman at Deal, in Kent, whose family was numerous and income limited, she manifested no other talent in childhood than perseverance. Indeed it was so difficult for her to study, that her father dissuaded her from attempting anything more than the most ordinary routine of education. She was, however, resolved to share the liberal studies of her brothers and sisters, and she persevered with such success that she at length excelled them all, and became the most learned woman of her time. Her domestic qualities were admirable; in all the relationships of life she exhibited a happy union of Christian principle and affectionate disinterestedness.

Elizabeth Carter was a great admirer of the writings of her own sex. She thought, and at that time very truly, they had not justice done them. Her biographer, the Rev. Montagu Pennington, says, "She was much induced to believe

that women had not their proper station in society, and that their mental powers were not rated sufficiently high. Though she detested the principles displayed in Mrs. Wolstoncroft's 'Rights of Woman,' and never wished them to interfere with the privileges and occupations of the other sex, yet she thought that men exercised too arbitrary a power over them, and considered them as too inferior to themselves. Hence she had a decided bias in favour of female writers, and always read their works with a mind prepared to be pleased, if the principles contained in them were good, and the personal characters of the authors amiable." Mrs. Elizabeth Carter contributed several papers to Dr. Johnson's "*Rambler*." Her poems are excellent as didactic poetry, but they have little imaginative power, or warmth.

Mrs. Chapone was, also, to be seen at these assemblies. Her book, on "The Improvement of the Mind," a series of letters addressed to a beloved niece, still retains its place as a most useful aid to young females who are engaged in carrying on their own education, and anxious about the formation of their character.

Miss Fanny Burney, afterwards Madame D'Arblay, who had suddenly stepped into fame by writing a novel that sketched with a lively pencil the manners of society, was a frequent visitor in these literary gatherings, more particularly at

**Mrs. Thrale's.** It is to her quick observation and rapid pen that we are indebted for the best description of the female circle that surrounded Dr. Johnson.\* The fashionable novel, that professes to describe the tone of manners in polite society, was considered to arise with her; though, of all the class, this kind of fiction is generally the least instructive and interesting. It seems strange how any one can call such tedious descriptions of insipid people, and such dull dialogue, full of the cant of fashion—light reading. Leaden, indeed, must be the biography or the history that is heavier than these are generally. Though these charges appropriately apply only to Miss Burney's imitators.

Miss Hannah More was unquestionably the most remarkable person that these conversaziones served to introduce to the leaders in the literary world. She visited Mrs. Montagu in her early youth, when her powers were in all the bloom of novelty and the freshness of enthusiasm. She was admired for her genius, and then loved for her excellences. Her literary course is well known. Poems and imaginative productions yielded as years advanced to practical, educational, and devotional works. Often an invalid, she contrived to do a great deal of work, besides pay-

\* See Madame D'Arblay's Memoirs, edited by

ing the penalty of her great popularity in the incursions of numerous visitors. She lived with four sisters; and after a most harmonious intercourse with them through life, was destined to survive them all, as well as the friends and patrons of her youth, dying at the advanced age of eighty-three.

It is a gratifying fact that the class of good books for the young, which Dr. Watts and Dr. Doddridge had been instrumental in calling into being, was greatly augmented by the writings of the gifted women of this time. Mrs. Barbauld and Mrs. Trimmer were among the most influential; while subsequently Miss Edgeworth in her prose stories, and Miss Jane Taylor, aided by her sister, in graceful flowing verse, taught lessons of practical wisdom that have doubtless influenced many a mind and heart throughout the whole of life.

Miss Edgeworth, however, is not to be entirely classed with educational writers. She founded a new and important school of fiction. The unnoticed customs that strengthen into habits, the errors that harden into vices, the virtues that for want of careful pruning, run to waste and become noxious, she analysed with the clear, quick perception of woman, and reasoned on with the logical sequence and precision of man. She had just enough imagination to construct her narratives, and no more; enough to lead, and not to

mislead. Vivacity, wit, and feeling, were hers in no small proportion; but a sound judgment, and strong, plain, good sense were paramount. We look in vain in her writings for any of those fine descriptions of natural scenery that so adorn the productions of many female imaginative writers. "Pictures in prose" were her aversion. Equally in vain we look for bursts of poetic enthusiasm. But her fine tact and discrimination of character, her sprightly dialogue, ready wit, great information, constant moral purpose, justly raised her to an eminence that few female writers in the department of fiction have since attained, and that none had previously reached.

Prudence and good sense, taught in a novel, was then, indeed, a rarity. The grave error of such works had been, and perhaps to some extent even yet is, to give a contempt for the homlier household virtues of economy, self-restraint, submission to parental authority, distrust of sudden emotions. Miss Edgeworth did good service by exemplifying and impersonating morals so charmingly, that the narrative fixed and delighted the attention, and so distinctly, that the lesson convinced the judgment and amended the character.

Two classes of critics have uttered objections to Miss Edgeworth's literary theory and practice. She has written of morals as entirely distinct from, or at least having no direct connection with,

religion. No mention of the latter as the foundation of all real moral excellence, and the guide and corrector of the feelings, occurs in her works. Hence it has been assumed that, to a certain extent, she ignored the most powerful of all influences, and the most authoritative of all motives, and substituted a mere worldly prudence. A really reverential mind will, however, pause before it utters such a censure. Miss Edgeworth might have justly thought a work of fiction a very unfit medium for conveying the most solemn and important of all teaching. Neither might she have had any sense of conscientious obligation to weave religion into her stories. One mind may, from reverential feeling, leave undone what a differently disciplined or constituted mind, equally from reverential feeling, feels bound to do. And, while there have been some admirable fictions that have stimulated pious feelings, and taught ennobling religious principles, candour compels the admission that in no class of imaginative writing has there been more pharisaical assumption, more false theology, more enervating sentimentalism, and grosser pictures of depravity, than in the so-called religious novel.

Another class of objectors complain that, by keeping one distinct moral lesson constantly in view as the purpose of each story, Miss Edgeworth restricted her powers, narrowed her limits,

and ran the chance (to which all teachers are exposed) of wearying her audience. It seems now to be conceded that the moralist, when writing fiction, had better not obtrude a given moral, but make his work so obviously healthy and useful, that the reader must derive benefit without feeling he has been lectured and schooled into approval. In defence of Miss Edgeworth's more definite plan, it may be alleged that when she began to write it was essential to raise the department of literature to which she devoted her talents to an acknowledged moral reputation; and that could not be so well done by less distinctness of purpose and obviousness of design.

We feel called on to offer these remarks in reference to Miss Edgeworth, because her name deservedly stands in the very first ranks among the reformers of a class of literature that, whether approved or not, exerts a very powerful influence on the general, and particularly the youthful, mind.

Miss Austin has been considered, by competent judges, to have excelled all her contemporaries in the skill, delicacy, and distinctness, with which she described domestic scenes and characters. The quiet beauty of her easy narrative,—the pure, unobtrusive, moral, and enlightened reasoning,—have won a permanent place for her in public estimation. Her stories are exquisite mosaics, every



minute part aiding the general effect. Her influence is manifest in many of the admirable productions of living female writers; while it is but just to say that we have yet amongst us many who, for varied descriptive power, poetic feeling, and wholesome purpose, quite equal, and perhaps excel, all their predecessors.

Notwithstanding the associative gatherings of literary women during the last century, there were some eminent imaginative female writers of the time who preferred retirement rather than the celebrity of literary gatherings. Mrs. Radcliffe, who introduced a new style of highly poetic and romantic fiction, rarely went into society. The beauties of nature were her great delight, and she sought retirement in order to enjoy them. Mrs. Radcliffe had been remarkable from childhood for her great mental powers, both of acquisition and expression. She did not, however, think of becoming an authoress until she had, by the engagements of her husband, very much leisure time on her hands, which she employed in writing something she thought would interest her husband on his return home late at night. He was astonished at the quantity and quality of the writing she thus executed, and encouraged her to persevere. Her story, when complete, was given to the public, and was followed in quick succession by others. Even those who do not approve of

the romantic character of her works\*, were constrained to admire their wonderful power of description, their poetic diction, and pure moral. They delineated not only the improbable, but the impossible, yet with such a grace that all readers were fascinated. Sir Walter Scott, speaking of her writings, says, "The praise may be claimed for her of having been the first to introduce into prose fictions a beautiful and fanciful tone of natural description and impressive narrative which had hitherto been exclusively applied to poetry." "Mrs. Radcliffe has a title to be considered as the first poetess of romantic fiction, that is, if actual rhythm shall not be deemed essential to poetry." Some idea of the vigour of her imagination may be gained from the fact that her descriptions of Italian scenery were so true to nature, that every one believed they were the result of intimate acquaintance with the country; which, however, she had never visited. A horde of imitators afterwards arose, who wrote tales of romance and horror that justly brought this style of writing into disrepute.

Mrs. Inchbald was another celebrated imaginative writer, who, during the greater part of her life lived much in retirement—a Suffolk farmer's daughter, self-taught, lovely, and intelligent. She

\* "Mysteries of Udolpho," "Sicilian Monk," &c.

had, in early years, been connected with the stage, which was also the profession of her husband. Nothing could be less theatrical than her habits of life. Constant in study, economical to a degree that seemed penurious, diffident in manners, she delighted in the quietude of her lonely home. She wrote many dramatic works, and was, besides, an eminent critic of such productions. Her chief work is "The Simple Story," a book that yet retains its place among the standard productions of its class. This, her best work, she retained by her for some years, not meeting with any publisher who would purchase it. When at length it made its way from the press, it was instantly approved; its pathos surpassed every thing in the way of the pathetic that had yet appeared.

It is a beautiful trait in the character of Mrs. Inchbald, that she debarred herself every luxury, and laboured at her pen continuously, in order to support an invalid sister, to whom she allowed a hundred a year for many years. Speaking of her own privations (for she was wholly dependent on her pen), she says,—“Many a time this winter, when I cried with cold, I said to myself,—But, thank God! my sister has not to stir from her room; she has her fire lighted every morning, all her provision bought, and brought to her ready cooked. She would be less able to bear what I bear; and how much more should I have to suffer

but from this reflection. It almost made me warm when I reflected that *she* suffered no cold; and yet, perhaps, this severe weather affected her also, for after only two days of dangerous illness, she died. I have now buried my whole family." It may be asked, why did they not live together? Probably the immediate care of a sick person would have entirely interrupted her plans of study. Besides, from the invitations she rejected, and the boarding-houses she tried for a time and left, it is evident that independence was necessary to her. She preferred, to use her own words, "her attic, her crust of bread, and liberty."

Miss Seward is remarkable among the literary ladies of the period for an extensive correspondence with the eminent persons, male and female, of her own time. These letters were, after her decease, edited by Sir Walter Scott, and appeared in 1811. They present, for persons fond of reading collections of letters, a copious and somewhat interesting memorial of the age. Miss Seward's style is studied to a degree that mars the power of the thought, and the interest of the reader: the heart has but little part in her productions of poetry or criticism.

Mrs. Charlotte Smith, whose sonnets Miss Seward unhesitatingly condemned, is still read as a gentle elegant poet, while Miss Seward's verses are nearly, if not quite, forgotten. It is honour-

able to Mrs. Smith, that she employed her talents less from ostentation than duty. Many terrible pecuniary misfortunes harassed her husband for several years. Her family was large, and she employed her pen to support and educate her children.

A similar motive called into active exercise the talents of a very gifted woman, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, whose charming "Letters from the Mountains" are so full of original and powerful thought. The life of this admirable woman was a perpetual struggle with difficulty and sorrow. Sir Walter Scott says of her, "The character and talents of Mrs. Grant of Laggan have long rendered her, not only a useful and estimable member of society, but one eminent for the services which she has rendered to the cause of religion, morality, knowledge, and taste. Her literary works, although composed amidst misfortune and privation, are written at once with simplicity and force, and uniformly bear the stamp of a virtuous and courageous mind, recommending to the reader that patience and fortitude which the writer herself practised in such an eminent degree."

Some idea of the domestic toils and trials of Mrs. Grant may be gathered from the fact that she had twelve children, eight of whom survived their father, and depended on her for education

and putting forth in the world; and of those eight, though they grew to maturity, only one outlived herself.

During this period, the first important historical work from the pen of an English female writer appeared. Mrs. Catherine Macaulay wrote her "History of England," from James I. to George I., in eight volumes; a book abounding in research, talent, and originality, but injured irreparably by the strong political bias of the writer. Her hatred of the Stuarts was so obvious in every page, that it invalidated her testimony as an historian. In the present day, when many of Mrs. Macaulay's opinions have become popular, her book would not arouse the animosity which it had to encounter at the time of its publication. Her work has, however, been partially superseded by more comprehensive and less prejudiced books.

The name of Mrs. Macáulay suggests another influential female name whose claims have neither been candidly considered nor honestly admitted by her own sex — Mary Wolstoncroft (afterwards) Godwin. The position this remarkable woman holds in reference to her own sex is precisely that which some scientific discoverer occupies, who, being wrong in his theories, yet directed attention to matters which had previously been uninvestigated.

Mary Wolstoncroft was a daughter of the people. She possessed a vigorous, noble, undisciplined mind

an affectionate, truthful, enthusiastic disposition, entirely unguided by religious principle. Some personal sorrows, a tyrannical father, and a faithless, worthless lover, led her to brood deeply on the social position of women, their sufferings and their wrongs. Her opinions, strong and defiant in themselves, lost nothing of their force from her independent, fearless way of stating them. Her book, "The Rights of Woman," notwithstanding her honest, mistaken philanthropy, contains, without question, the severest censures that ever woman passed on her sister woman. Her very anger was a proof of her love and her earnestness. Mary Wolstoncroft's view of female education, *as it then existed*, led her to look for and expect evil results: she contended that dissimulation rather than sincerity was the basis of female education; and that the result manifested itself in her character. Men looked grave, and women were deeply offended at her strictures. Her personal sorrows, her defective religious opinions, were eagerly and angrily investigated and denounced; and when she died, in some respects a martyr to her mistaken theories\*, the general belief was she had injured rather than advanced the interests of woman.

The opinions we have quoted of the good Eli-

\* Mrs. Mary Wolstoncroft Godwin, it is said, died in consequence of refusing the surgical aid of a male practitioner, in a maternal crisis.

zabeth Carter were the general opinions entertained by the more moderate and conscientious among women; while others, in a spirit not very accordant with their Christian profession, denounced her yet more bitterly. Meanwhile her startling theories were not forgotten; they were read to be confuted; and many were the writers, male and female, chiefly the latter, who sought to present an antidote to the poison, which, as they believed, she had poured forth.

People may read and talk without thinking, but when they write, they must think. Gradually amid the mist of prejudice this truth loomed distinctly forth, that woman was not all she might be, and that society was not as just to her as it ought to be. The most cautious and timid saw so far, and mildly and intelligently began to devise remedies. Woman's duties, privileges, rights and wrongs, character and capabilities, were investigated and set forth with more or less ability, and with all honesty of purpose. That good has resulted, and yet will result,—that some order has come out of much confusion,—none can deny who look in the present day at what woman is doing in our literature. Occasionally, as the number of writers on the subject have multiplied, we hear some faint, and some loud, murmurs at the monotony of the theme; but, when we remember that it concerns no less than the half of the human race, man, at



least, if not able or disposed to do more, may afford to listen patiently, and not obstruct with ridicule woman's efforts to work out for herself a better education and a more intellectual influence.

One omission is rather palpable even among the religious refuters of the theories of Mrs. Wolstoncroft Godwin. While they have necessarily asserted and admitted the obligations woman owes to Christianity, for the spiritual equality to which it has elevated her, they have rarely compared the conduct of society towards woman with the authoritative standard of Scripture, or sought from sacred records for confirmation or correction of opinions and prejudices with regard to her.

As female writers appeared in rapid succession, it could not be said at the end of the century, as Dr. Johnson had recorded of the beginning,—“that any acquaintance with books among women was noticed only to be censured.”

It is but just to remark, that in England the literary coteries in which ladies assembled never degenerated into political cabals, as in France. Here, they were what they pretended to be,—places for intellectual intercourse and literary conversation. The tone of manners—that outward manifestation of morals, improved greatly. Scandal and malice, the companions of the tea-tables, described by the satirists of the early part of the century, disappeared before the presence of

more enlarged knowledge and intellectual cultivation. More union of feeling among women themselves was manifested, and generally a more worthy appreciation of each other's talents.

New and enlightened views as to female education began to prevail. Miss Elizabeth Hamilton wrote sensibly on the subject, and in her admirable *Essays* directed attention to the all-pervading selfishness that so insidiously lurks in the heart, and deteriorates the motive. A superior purity and refinement manifested itself in our literature. Female authorship, and yet more, a female reading public, may justly claim to have helped to bring about this improvement.

It is not pretended that there were no bad and corrupting female writers; but they were so completely exceptions, that the rule became admitted, and cannot, as a general proposition, be controverted to the present time — that a pure moral purpose influences most female writers. And if they do not always effect that purpose, it is from error of the judgment, and not of the heart.

In glancing over these writers, thus rapidly named, whose number might be much increased, it will be seen that various departments of literature were treated, and we have selected the more prominent in each. We now have, in most of these departments, greater female names than those mentioned. Critics, essayists, novelists, poets,

educational and devotional writers of the female sex abounded, and yet abound. If the living have excelled their predecessors of the past age, it must be remembered it is easier to improve than to make a new path. Those who first, it may be with faltering steps, explored the way, unheeding the ridicule and opposition of the sarcastic and invidious, made it comparatively safe and easy for their successors.

## CHAP. XVIII.

MODERN FEMALE POETS — MRS. TIGHE — MRS. HEMANS. —  
MISS LONDON — MRS. JOANNA BAILLIE.

TOWARDS the end of the last century, and the beginning of the present, we had a number of female writers who, in the exercise of the highest imaginative and descriptive power, excelled all their predecessors. The first of these was Mrs. Tighe, an Irish lady, the daughter of the Rev. William Blachford. Her "Psyche," a fine poem in the Spenserian stanza, was the most sustained poetic effort that had then been given to the world by the female mind. It is a poem to read as a whole, rather than to quote in isolated passages. A luxurious dreamy sweetness pervades the descriptions, and gives them a peculiar charm, while the easy elegance of the flowing language attests the complete power of the poet over her theme. This gifted lady lived much in seclusion, suffering from ill health, and died at her husband's beautiful seat, Woodstock, near Kilkenny, in the south of Ireland, at the comparatively early age of thirty-seven. The scenery in which the last days of the poet were passed is that in which

Spenser wandered when he wrote his "Fairy Queen." And no region is more calculated by its wild luxuriance to call up visions of beauty and delight than the whole of the south-east district of Ireland. Mrs. Tighe excelled also in the short poem: the following has a beauty far beyond the mere charm of the graceful verse.

## THE LILY.

- "How wither'd, perish'd, seems the form  
 Of yon obscure unsightly root!  
 Yet from the blight of wintry storm,  
 It hides secure the precious fruit.
- "The careless eye can find no grace,  
 No beauty in the scaly folds,  
 Nor see within the dark embrace  
 What latent loveliness it holds.
- "Yet in that bulb, those sapless scales,  
 The lily wraps her silver vest,  
 'Till vernal suns and vernal gales  
 Shall kiss once more her fragrant breast.
- "Yes, hide beneath the mouldering heap,  
 The undelighting slighted thing;  
 There in the cold earth buried deep,  
 In silence let it wait the Spring.
- "Oh! many a stormy night shall close  
 In gloom upon the barren earth,  
 While still, in undisturb'd repose,  
 Uninjur'd lies the future birth,

“ And ignorance with sceptic eye,  
Hope's patient smile shall wondering view ;  
Or mock her fond credulity,  
As her soft tears the spot bedew.

“ Sweet smile of hope, delicious tear !  
The sun, the shower, indeed shall come ;  
The promis'd verdant shoot appear,  
And nature bid her blossoms bloom.

“ And thou, O virgin Queen of Spring !  
Shalt from thy dark and lowly bed,  
Bursting thy green sheath's silken string,  
Unveil thy charms, and perfume shed ;

“ Unfold thy robes of purest white,  
Unsullied from their darksome grave ;  
And thy soft petals' silvery light  
In the mild breeze unfetter'd wave.

“ So Faith shall seek the lowly dust,  
Where humble sorrow loves to lie,  
And bid her thus her hopes entrust,  
And watch with patient cheerful eye ;

“ And bear the long, cold wintry night ;  
And bear her own degrading doom ;  
And wait till heaven's returning light,  
Eternal Spring ! shall burst the gloom.”

It was to the memory of Mrs. Tighe that Mrs. Hemans wrote her “ Grave of a Poetess.” Some years afterwards, Mrs. Hemans visited the scene, which previously she had only seen in imagination,

and wrote some graceful stanzas that were followed by an epitaph of great tenderness and beauty.

“ Farewell, belov'd and mourn'd! We miss awhile  
 Thy tender gentleness of voice and smile,  
 And that bless'd gift of heaven to cheer us lent —  
 That thrilling touch divinely eloquent,  
 Which breath'd the soul of prayer, deep, fervent, high,  
 Through thy rich strains of sacred harmony.  
 Yet from those very memories there is born  
 A soft light pointing to celestial morn :  
 Oh! bid it guide us where thy footsteps trod,  
 To meet at last ' the pure in heart ' with God.”

There was considerable similarity in the genius of Mrs. Tighe and Mrs. Hemans; the same affluence of imagery, the same susceptibility to the beauties of nature, the same tender grace. But in deep pathos and elevated Christian spirituality, Mrs. Hemans undoubtedly surpassed all her feminine predecessors.

The incidents of the life of Mrs. Hemans are as well known as her poetry. Born 1793 in Liverpool, her father of Irish, her mother of Italian and German extraction, removing in her seventh year to Grwyth in North Wales, the lovely intelligent child, surrounded by happy influences of natural scenery and human sympathy, grew up a creature of light and love. Poetry, music, drawing, languages, were not merely the studies, but the delights, of her childhood and

youth. Loving retirement, she derived all the advantages that seclusion in the bosom of an affectionate and intelligent family circle could confer. Once, and once only, she visited the metropolis (in her eleventh year), and, though of course, interested, went back to rural quietude more than ever prepared to enjoy it.

An early, and, it is thought, unhappy marriage was the sad termination of this joyous youth. After a few years she returned to her mother's roof. Captain Hemans visited the Continent, and for the remaining seventeen years of her life did not return. Five sons were their mother's care and consolation. Mrs. Hemans had never laid aside the studies she loved so well. She wrote from her earliest years. Her first published poem dates back to her eighth year. Her first effusions were chiefly tributes of affection, birthday stanzas, &c. In her fourteenth year she wrote a poem "England and Spain," which, for command of language, power of versification, and historical knowledge, was a remarkable production for a young girl. She then made many elegant translations from the Italian and Spanish, which were much admired. Many of her youthful stanzas had a martial glow that surprises those who remember the gentle sweetness of her character. But her brothers and her affianced husband being of the military profession, naturally




made her view it through the medium of the affections. And it should also be remembered that the sentiments now entertained in reference to war, after our more than thirty years of peace with European powers, are very different from those that prevailed in the early part of the present century.

It was when experience and sorrow had matured the genius of this gifted woman that her finest poems were written. That they most of them breathe a plaintive strain was not, in her case, an affected sentimentality, but the natural result of a life of trial operating on a deep and tender heart.

Her "Records of Woman" is a peculiarly valuable section of her voluminous works. No writer presented tenderness so chastened from the mere impulse of enthusiasm, self-sacrifice for the good of others so nobly persevered in, moral and spiritual grace so completely elevating the whole nature and sanctifying every duty.

She herself thought her "Forest Sanctuary" the most finished of her poems. A careful reading of its musical Spenserian stanza, and reflection on its lovely narrative and exquisite descriptions, will confirm her judgment. It is a tale of a protestant convert, who fled from the persecution of his native land (Spain) to America, bearing with him his wife and child. The wife, deeply loving her husband, but not a convert to his faith, ex-



hausted with previous anxiety and sorrow, dies at sea, and the husband and child reach their "Forest Sanctuary" in the New World, where the father recounts to the son the story of his persecutions, exile, and bereavement. The description of an "Auto da Fé" and of "The Burial at Sea" are in her best manner.

THE AUTO DA FÉ.

"Did he, not say, farewell? Alas, no breath  
 Came to mine ear. Hoarse murmurs from the throng  
 Told that the mysteries in the face of death  
 Had from their eager sight been veil'd too long.  
 And we were parted as the surge might part  
 Those that would die together, true of heart.  
 His hour was come — but in mine anguish strong,  
 Like a fierce swimmer through the midnight sea,  
 Blindly I rush'd away from that which was to be.

"Away, away I rush'd; but swift and high  
 The arrowy pillars of the firelight grew,  
 'Till the transparent darkness of the sky  
 Flush'd to a blood-red mantle in their hue;  
 And, phantom-like, the kindling city seem'd  
 To spread, float, wave, as on the wind they stream'd,  
 With their wild splendour chasing me! I knew  
 The death-work was begun—I veil'd mine eyes,  
 Yet stopp'd in spell-bound fear to catch the victim's cries.

"What heard I then? a ringing shriek of pain,  
 Such as for ever haunts the tortur'd ear?  
 I heard a sweet and solemn-breathing strain,  
 Piercing the flame, untremulous and clear!

The rich triumphal tones! I knew them well,  
 As they came floating with a breezy swell!  
 Man's voice was there — a clarion voice to cheer  
 In the mid-battle — ay, to turn the flying;  
 Woman's — that might have sung of heaven beside the  
 dying!

“It was a fearful, yet a glorious thing,  
 To hear that hymn of martyrdom, and know  
 That its glad stream of melody could spring  
 Up from th' unsounded gulphs of human woe!  
 Alvar! Theresa! what is deep? what strong?  
*God's breath within the soul!* It fill'd that song  
 From your victorious voices! But the glow  
 On the hot air, and lurid skies increas'd:  
 Faint grew the sounds — more faint, — I listen'd, they had  
 ceas'd!”

#### THE BURIAL AT SEA.

“But the true parting came! I look'd my last  
 On the sad beauty of that slumbering face:  
 How could I think the lovely spirit pass'd  
 Which there had left so tenderly its trace?  
 Yet a dim awfulness was on the brow —  
 No! not like sleep to look upon art thou,  
 Death! Death! She lay, a thing for earth's embrace,  
 To cover with spring-wreaths. For earth's? — the wave,  
 That gives the bier no flowers, makes moan above her  
 grave!

“On the mid seas a knell! for man was there,  
 Anguish and love — the mourner with his dead!  
 A long, low-rolling knell — a voice of prayer,  
 Dark glassy waters, like a desert spread —

And the pale shining Southern Cross on high,  
 Its faint stars fading from a solemn sky,  
 Where mighty clouds before the dawn grew red :  
 Were these things round me ? Such o'er memory sweep,  
 Wildly, when aught brings back that burial of the deep.

“ Then the broad lonely sunrise ! and the plash  
 Into the sounding waves ! Around her head  
 They parted with a glancing moment's flash,  
 Then shut — and all was still. And now thy bed  
 Is of their secrets, gentlest Leonor !  
 Once fairest of young brides ! and never more,  
 Loved as thou wert, may human tear be shed  
 Above thy rest ! no mark the proud seas keep,  
 To show where he that wept may pause again to weep.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Where the line sounds not, where the wrecks lie low,  
 What shall wake thence the dead ? Blest, blest are they  
 That earth to earth entrust, for they may know  
 And tend the dwelling whence the slumberer's clay  
 Shall rise at last ; and bid the young flowers bloom,  
 That waft a breath of hope around the tomb ;  
 And kneel upon the dewy turf to pray !  
 But thou, what cave hath dimly chamber'd thee ?  
 Vain dreams ! oh ! art thou not where there is ‘ no more  
 sea ? ’ \* ”

Mrs. Hemans, when she composed this noble poem, was so overcome with the power and pathos of her imagination, that she wrote with tears streaming down her cheeks, and her health and

\* Revelations, xxi. 1.

spirits suffered deeply—so real and actual in her case was the influence of “the vision and the faculty divine.”

To multitudes, however, her short lyrics, or her exquisite sonnets, will ever be the favourite productions of her muse. These all have a purpose. They relate a narrative, describe a scene, or teach a moral. They are full of exquisite musical verse, flowing diction, and delicate refinement.

A volume might be filled with the praises that the most eminent men of our age have uttered of Mrs. Hemans’s genius. Professor Wilson, Lord Jeffrey, Bishop Heber, Archbishop Whateley, and a host of other bright names have recorded their admiration of her genius in warmest eulogiums. The correctness of their estimate is shown in the fact that in the midst of newer claims to poetic fame, her works remain inwrought in many a heart, and completely interwoven with the poetic literature of the age.

Contemporary with Mrs. Hemans was the brilliant and enthusiastic Letitia Elizabeth Landon, a creature gifted with a quickness, versatility, and glowing radiance of mind, that immediately excited wonder and admiration. Born in London, and seldom leaving it, with a desultory rather than liberal education, this gifted being seemed without much study to have a compre-

hensive range of knowledge, that aided her imagination in its flights, and enabled her to pour forth with startling rapidity, not merely numerous short lyrics, but many lengthened poems, all, even the most unpruned, replete with genius. Beautiful, yet sad, is her estimate of the poet's fate.

“I know not whether Love can fling  
 A deeper witchery from his wing  
 Than falls, sweet power of song, from thine.  
 Yet, ah! the wreath that binds thy shrine,  
 Though seemingly all bloom and light,  
 Hides thorn and canker, worm and blight.  
 Planet of wayward destinies,  
 Thy victims are thy votaries!  
 Alas! for him whose youthful fire  
 Is vow'd and wasted on the lyre,—  
 Alas! for him who shall essay  
 The laurel's long and dreary way!  
 Mocking, with great neglect, will chill  
 His spirit's gush, his bosom's thrill;  
 And worst of all that heartless praise  
 Echo'd from what another says.  
 He dreams a dream of life and light,  
 And grasps the rainbow that appears  
 Afar, all beautiful and bright,  
 And finds it only formed of tears.”

Just as this admired poet had manifested a deeper purpose in her writings, and a more healthful moral tone, she became Mrs. Maclean, and went with her husband (the Governor of Cape

Coast Castle) to Africa, where she died suddenly, from poison, it is thought accidentally taken. Her remarkable genius and melancholy fate have invested her name with an indelible and tender interest. Rarely among women has a more powerful and graceful mind been kindled. Her aspirations for fame will be tenderly responded to by every heart.

“ I am myself but a vile link  
 Amid life's weary chain;  
 But I have spoken hallow'd words,  
 Oh! do not say in vain!

“ My first, my last, my only wish,—  
 Say, will my charmed chords  
 Wake to the morning light of fame,  
 And breathe again my words?

“ Will the young maiden, when her tears  
 Alone in moonlight shine —  
 Tears for the absent and the loved —  
 Murmur some song of mine?

“ Will the pale youth, with his dim lamp,  
 Himself a dying flame,  
 From many an antique scroll beside,  
 Choose that which bears my name?

“ Let music make less terrible  
 The silence of the dead ;  
 I care not, so my spirit last  
 Long after life has fled.”

It is due to the northern part of the British

dominions to record that even so far back as the sixteenth century, Scotland excelled us in short lyric and ballad poetry. And at a time when poetry of a genuine inartificial kind declined in our land, there were true hearts in Scotland who wrote not as fashion but feeling prompted. Many female writers were among them. Jean Adams, a poor woman of the town of Greenock, contemporary with our Richardson, whom she greatly admired, wrote that charming domestic lyric, "There's nae luck about the house." "Flowers of the Forest," the first and second parts, were respectively written by Jane Elliot and Mrs. Cockburn; and "Auld Robin Gray" by the Lady Ann Lindsay, afterwards Bernard. The merit of these various stanzas is their simplicity and truth. It is not, therefore, surprising that Scotland, in the latter half of the last century (1762), should have produced a female poet of the very highest excellence, the late venerable Joanna Baillie.

Nothing could be more quiet and unpretending than the life of this admirable woman. In childhood and youth she was more remarkable for vivacity than literary talent, and in acquirement was not equal to her beloved elder sister, Agnes, the companion and (alas! for her) survivor of her life. Acuteness of observation, and a wonderfully active and vigorous imagination, were



her peculiar endowments. A habit of early rising enabled her to cultivate her native taste for poetry, both in reading and composition, unobserved and unsuspected. She entertained the idea of depicting the passions in reference to their moral phenomena and effects in a series of dramatic productions. A single passion, as "love," "ambition," "hatred," was to be separately the subject of a tragedy and of a comedy. The idea was original; it had much of the metaphysical subtilty for which her countrymen are famed; and the manner in which it was worked out commanded the approbation of the leading minds of the period. Sir Walter Scott's admiration was warmly expressed in his introduction to the third canto of "Marmion."

"Twice an hundred years roll'd o'er,  
 When she, the bold Enchantress, came  
 With fearless hand and heart on flame!  
 From the pale willow snatch'd the treasure,  
 And swept it with a kindred measure,  
 Till Avon's swans, while rung the grove  
 With Montfort's hate and Basil's love,  
 Awakening at the inspired strain,  
 Deem'd their own Shakspeare lived again."

Ebenezer Elliott also says, —

"Tragic Baillie found, on Avon's side,  
 The mantle left by Shakspeare when he died."

Southey equally shared in this enthusiastic

estimate of her genius. These poems, though in the dramatic form, are most adapted, as many of them probably were intended, for the quiet perusal of the closet. Mrs. Joanna Baillie was about thirty-eight when the first volume of these "Plays of the Passions" first appeared. Nine years after, two other volumes followed. They were severely dealt with by an influential portion of the press\*, who, while they could not object to the poetry, disliked the plan of the whole; and the name of this gifted writer must be added to the number of great poets of the present day whose first appearance was met with severity, rather than greeted with approval. This, however, was not only patiently borne, because the mind of Mrs. Joanna Baillie was too equally balanced to be unduly elated or depressed either with praise or blame; but because the opinions of eminent poets in her case completely neutralised the censures of critics.

There are, however, a large class of readers who greatly prefer the narrative to the dramatic form of composition. And to these her "Metrical Legends" will ever be the most acceptable portion of her works. "William Wallace," "Christopher Columbus," and "Lady Griseld Baillie," are truly noble poems. A clear masculine vigour of expression united to feminine grace and purity, and, with all her deep tragic powers,

\* More particularly the Edinburgh Review.

a healthful hue of cheerfulness, is diffused over her narratives.

Beautifully has she described the duties and the privileges of her own sex in the following fine lines from the introduction to the "Lady Griseld Baillie."

"But she of gentler nature, softer, dearer,  
Of daily life the active, kindly cheerer ;  
With generous bosom, age or childhood shielding,  
And in the storms of life, though mov'd, unyielding ;  
Strength in her gentleness, hope in her sorrow,  
Whose darkest hours some ray of brightness borrow  
From better days to come, whose meek devotion  
Calms every wayward passion's wild commotion ;  
In want and suff'ring, soothing, useful, sprightly,  
Bearing the press of evil hap so lightly,  
Till evil's self seems its strong hold betraying  
To the sweet witch'ry of such winsome playing ;  
Bold from affection, if by nature fearful,  
With varying brow, sad, tender, anxious, cheerful,—  
This is meet partner for the loftiest mind,  
With crown or helmet graced,—yea, this is womankind."

Equally beautiful is the following : —

"The heart's affection — secret thing !  
Is like the cleft rock's ceaseless spring,  
Which free and independent flows  
Of summer rains or winter snows.  
The fox-glove from its side may fall,  
The heath-bloom fade, or moss-flower white,  
But still its streamlet, bright though small,  
Will issue sweetly to the light."

Some of Mrs. Joanna Baillie's poems on sacred themes are doubly impressive from their entire unadorned simplicity.

## ST. LUKE, XVIII. 16.

“ ‘ Let little children come to me,’  
Our Lord and Saviour said,  
As on a humble, harmless brow  
His gentle hand was laid.

“ The teachable and simple heart  
Fears not to be beguil'd ;  
Who enters Heaven must love and trust,  
E'en as a little child.

“ The mightiest king, the wisest sage,  
Who knows his God aright,  
Himself a helpless infant feels,  
In the Almighty's sight.

“ A nursling at his lesson set,  
Who hopes at last to know,  
Is the most learn'd of Adam's race,  
In this our home below.

“ An urchin with his borrow'd rod,  
Who smites with guided hand,  
Earth's greatest conqueror hath been,  
The lord of many a land.

“ ‘ Let little children come to me !’  
A cheering welcome given  
To all with guileless, humble hearts,  
Who seek the way to heaven.”

Equally beautiful is the following : —

“ WEEP NOT,” LUKE VII. 12.

- In silent sorrow from the gates of Nain,  
 Bearing their dead, the widow's only son,  
 A band of friends went forth : and with that train  
 E'en she, the most bereft, mov'd sadly on.
- “ But when the Lord beheld the piteous sight,  
 He had compassion on her : from Him broke  
 Soft tenderness of soul, with saving might,  
 And ‘ Weep not ’ were the gracious words He spoke.
- “ In deep affliction 'tis that voice we hear,  
 When pitying, helpless friends keep silence round ;  
 Weep not ! there's saving power, there's comfort near,  
 That will e'en in the darkest hour be found.
- “ It is an hour of darkest, deepest woe,  
 When those we love are sever'd from our side ;  
 Yet weep not, for we soon and surely go  
 Upon their steps, led by the same blest Guide.
- “ It is a darken'd hour, when evil fame  
 And evil fortune mingle in our lot ;  
 Yet weep not, He, who scorn, rebuke, and shame  
 Bore for our worthless sakes, deserts us not.
- “ It is an hour of darkness, when the soul,  
 She knows not why, dreads an impending doom,  
 While heaven and earth seem one black, formless scroll,  
 But weep not, light will yet break through the gloom.
- “ Poor soul ! He who beheld the widow's grief,  
 And touch'd the bier, and from death's bands set free  
 Her only son, hath for all woes relief,  
 And ‘ Weep not ’ are the words he speaks to thee.”

Mrs. Joanna Baillie lived to a very advanced age (89) an embodiment of all that was "pure, lovely, and of good report." Many as had been the female poets of her time, none had surpassed, and few equalled, herself; while the originality, the calm, deep flow of thought, that pervades her writings, will effectually keep them from being superseded in the estimation of the reflective reader.

It is a gratifying consideration, that among female poetic as well as prose writers, there are living names of equal celebrity with those who have departed. It is not our purpose to speak further of them, than to remark that no age has given such undoubted evidence of the high intellectual attainments of woman as the present,— a fact which must be most favourable to the interests of education and the progress of society; for of woman it is especially true that none liveth or dieth to herself.

## CHAP. XVIII

ILLUSTRIOUS YOUTHEL POETS.—HENRY KIRKE WHITE—  
ROBERT POLLOCK—JOHN KEATS—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

WHEN the thoughtful mind reverts to the disappointments and sorrows of genius, "mighty poets in their misery dead" throng foremost among the gifted sons of men. We are apt, however, tacitly to compliment the present age by carrying our regrets and indignant sympathies to previous times. Butler, the victim of neglect and ingratitude; Otway, struggling ineffectually with the most humiliating poverty, and perishing in the struggle; Chatterton, in the frenzy of famine rushing through the gates of death; Burns, heart-broken: these are all deep tragedies; we think of them with a sigh, and then thank heaven such times are over. Yet, if absolute starvation is less frequently than formerly the doom of genius, as long as the sublime words remain "Man shall not live by bread alone," so long will genius have to mourn, and master, if it can, its sorrows and its wrongs.

The four names that head our chapter, perhaps, present as remarkable a manifestation of varied genius as ever blazed out in youth, and then

suddenly ceased, amid the wonder and the tears of a world, bereaved, not only of its possessions, but its hopes.

Henry Kirke White was born in humble life March 21st, 1785, and not only so, but the business of his father, a butcher, in Nottingham, was from the first dawn of consciousness painfully uncongenial to the mind of this very sensitive and observant child. One inestimable blessing, however, compensated all other sorrows. Henry had a mother who deeply sympathised with his feelings, and who early noticed and appreciated his genius. The mother and son were all the world to each other. She was an intelligent, superior woman. Under her instruction, the child, at seven years of age, was not only fond of reading, and devoured every book that came in his way, but he began to express his thoughts in writing, his mother being the confidant of his compositions. It appears that the father, unmoved either by the gentle boy's dislike of his business, or the objections of the mother, persisted in his intention of compelling Henry to follow the trade of a butcher.

At the age of thirteen Henry had made considerable progress in his English studies, completely mastered the French language, and commenced the poetic compositions that have won his fame. Nevertheless, carrying the butcher's basket formed



the principal occupation of his daily life; and at fourteen a complete conclusion was put to his school education by his father's determination.

At this time, the good mother, anxious to aid her gifted son, and to rescue him from his unworthy toil, assisted by her daughter, commenced a girls' school, and being, by the success of this effort, able to add to the family income, she prevailed with her husband to give up his determination, and to let the studious and gentle boy continue his studies.

But, though the mother's efforts to rescue her son were successful, the means to educate him as she wished, and he deserved, could not be procured, and Henry was, at length, placed in an attorney's office, a lengthened term of servitude being agreed on instead of the usual premium. In the first two years of his term, the youth acquired considerable proficiency in Latin, and made some acquaintance, almost without assistance, with Greek, and also the Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Besides these studies, at fifteen, he contributed frequently to several periodicals, and at seventeen, prepared, by the advice of a friend, a volume of poems for the press.

These poems were the means of introducing him to his affectionate and admiring biographer, Robert Southey, whose generous enthusiasm has so successfully directed public attention to the

genius of Henry Kirke White. The name of the young man, nevertheless, was hardly forgotten, and conflicts of a kind that were not common in his generation had gathered round him, and directed the eye of such a man as a great power of nature, the student studying in the school, the soul of Kirke's genius was upon the soul, and the more intense was the struggle in nature. The dramatic desire now possessed him, in which he devoted his talents to the service of the Church, and was soon admitted to the rank of chorist in either St. John's College, Cambridge, or a seminary. Here, at length, free to study, the long-repressed desires broke forth with unusual impetuosity: he wished to gain a literary scholarship, and gave himself up to that insatiable ambition with all the ardour of youth and hope. His health, unhappily, never robust, gave way; and his whole term of college life was an incessant struggle of his mental powers with his declining physical strength. His writings during this period show the conflicts of his mind; these, however, were at length calmed, and a heavenly spirit of resignation and peace was his. He died in 1806, at the age of twenty-one. His brief life is a poem, sweet, tender, heroic!

The principal poetic efforts of Henry Kirke White are "Clifton Grove" and "Gondoline," both showing great descriptive and imaginative power. His shorter poems, particularly his non-

nets, are, perhaps, the most known. It seems as if, long before his last illness, he had a prescience of his early death and its cause; for, when not more than fourteen, "Consumption" formed, strangely enough, the subject of an eccentric drama, a subject he often afterwards recurred to,—indeed that seemed to haunt him.

He says,

TO CONSUMPTION,

"Gently, most gently, on thy victim's head,  
Consumption, lay thy hand! Let me decay,  
Like the expiring lamp, unseen away,  
And softly go to slumber with the dead.  
And if 'tis true what holy men have said,  
That strains angelic oft foretel the day  
Of death, to those good men who fall thy prey,  
O let the ærial music round my bed,  
Dissolving sad in dying symphony,  
Whisper the solemn warning in mine ear,  
That I may bid my weeping friends good bye  
Ere I depart upon my journey drear;  
And smiling faintly on the painful past,  
Compose my decent head, and breathe my last."

A very exquisite sonnet is that

TO EVENING.

"Ye unseen spirits! Whose wild melodies  
At evening rising slow, yet sweetly clear,  
Steal on the musing poet's pensive ear,  
As by the wood-spring stretch'd supine he lies,

When he who now invokes you low is laid,  
 His tir'd frame resting on the earth's cold bed,  
 Hold ye your nightly vigils o'er his head  
 And chant a dirge to his reposing shade !  
 For he was wont to love your madrigals,  
 And often by the haunted stream that laves  
 The dark sequester'd woodland's inmost caves,  
 Would sit and listen to the dying falls,  
 'Till the full tear would quiver in his eye,  
 And his big heart would heave with mournful ex-  
 stasy."

There are few short poems more elegant than  
 his lines

TO AN EARLY PRIMROSE.

- "Mild offspring of a dark and sullen sire !  
 Whose modest form, so delicately fine,  
 Was nurs'd in whirling storms,  
 And cradled in the winds.
- "Thee, when young Spring first question'd Winter's  
 sway,  
 And dar'd the sturdy blusterer to the fight —  
 Thee, on this bank he threw  
 To mark his victory.
- "In this low vale, the promise of the year  
 Serene, thou openest to the nipping gale,  
 Unnotic'd and alone,  
 Thy tender elegance.
- "So virtue blooms, brought forth amid the storms  
 Of chill adversity, in some lone walk  
 Of life she rears her head,  
 Obscure and unobserv'd,

“ While every bleaching breeze that on her blows  
 Chastens her spotless purity of breast,  
 And hardens her to bear  
 Serene — the ills of life.”

The genius of this youthful poet, so early lost, was so manifest, that men of very diverse sentiments, and totally opposite theories of poetry, united to honour his name and mourn his premature death. Southey and Byron, if on no other theme, agreed here. Very unaffectedly, with true pathos, Byron says,

“ No marble marks thy couch of lowly sleep,  
 But living statues there are seen to weep;  
 Affection's semblance bends not o'er thy tomb,  
 Affection's self deploras thy youthful doom.”

And again, referring sorrowfully to those studies that had so impaired his health, and probably shortened his life, he says,

“ Unhappy White! while life was in its spring,  
 And thy young muse just wav'd her joyous wing,  
 The spoiler came; and all thy promise fair  
 Has sought the grave, to sleep for ever there.  
 Oh! what a noble heart was here undone  
 When science' self destroy'd her favourite son!  
 Yes, she too much indulg'd thy fond pursuit,  
 She sow'd the seeds, but death has reap'd the fruit;  
 'Twas thine own genius gave the final blow,  
 And help'd to plant the wound that laid thee low.  
 So the struck eagle stretch'd upon the plain,  
 No more through rolling clouds to soar again;

View'd his own feather on the fatal dart,  
And wing'd the shaft that quiver'd in his heart.  
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel  
He nurs'd the pinion which impell'd the steel ;  
While the same plumage that had warm'd his nest  
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast."

A similar fate, though not quite so early in life, befell another youthful poet of remarkable genius. Robert Pollok, the author of "The Course of Time," was the youngest son of a farmer at Muirhouse, about eleven miles from Glasgow. He was born in 1798, and received the usual education given to Scottish children of his class. The boy was studious, and used to pass the long winter evenings (his only leisure time) in reading. At fourteen he was put to learn the business of a cartwright ; but an elder brother, who was studying for the ministry, noticing Robert's talents and habits of study, advised his leaving mechanical pursuits, and attending to the improvement of his mind. Happily parental consent was freely given ; and, after two years' preparation, the youth was admitted to the University of Glasgow, where he took a degree at the age of twenty-two, and subsequently became a candidate for the ministry. The discourses prepared by him attracted notice, not unmixed with censure, for their remarkable brilliancy and power. His constant application, it was thought, accelerated, if it did not induce,

the ill health that began to threaten him. In May, 1827, he was licensed to preach by the United Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh; but he did not long exercise the sacred function, preaching only a very few times. Consumption made swift strides towards the victim. His remarkable poem was the product of a long-cherished idea that he had conceived when a mere boy, fourteen years before it was completed. The last two years of the author's life was the time devoted to the working out of this youthful idea; and, frequently, so rapid was the poet, a thousand lines were written weekly. He needed to be rapid, it was a race with death. "The Course of Time" was published very near the period that terminated the author's life, without "apology, proem, argument, or table of contents," nothing but its plain title, and—"A Poem in Ten Books." It came from a death-bed to the reader. It is not surprising that it attracted immediate attention, nor that in the midst of wonder and applause, some opinions were uttered of an adverse kind.

Robert Pollok aspired to be eminently a sacred poet: for this he lived, studied, wrote, prayed, and died.\* That he was permitted to realise that desire no religious reader can doubt; but the very fact of the exclusively sacred character of his

\* In the sense that a conviction of duty caused him to study beyond his strength.

theme would necessarily prevent a thoughtless or a worldly mind from enjoying it. The plan of his poem is highly original, and his Christian principles were so strict, that he rejected the machinery of heathen classical allusions, so liberally used by many religious poets, and confined himself to imagery supplied or suggested by the Scriptures. This simplicity scarcely comports with the epic form of poetry. It is said, "The whole story may be given in a sentence. Many ages after the end of our world, a spirit, from one of the numerous worlds existing in space, on his flight towards heaven, discovers the abode of lost men in hell; reaching heaven, he inquires of two spirits, who welcome his arrival there, what is the meaning of the wretchedness he had just witnessed. The two, unable fully to answer, conduct the inquirer to a bard, who once lived on earth, and he, in answering their inquiries, relates the history of man, from the creation to the judgment." This plan, simple and limited as to plot, is boundless as to range. The imagination, unfettered, soars far and wide; the past, the future, blend in one grand whole, and, though no rules of structure or composition are strictly followed, the glowing thoughts shape the poem into a form always grand and striking, and often truly sublime.



Nothing can be more just and noble than the following stanzas on

FALSE AND TRUE LIBERTY.

“ One passion prominent appears, the lust  
 Of power, which oftentimes took the fairer name  
 Of liberty, and hung the popular flag  
 Of freedom out. Many, indeed, its names.  
 When on the throne it sat, and round the neck  
 Of millions riveted its iron chain,  
 And on the shoulders of the people laid  
 Burdens unmerciful, its title took  
 Of tyranny, oppression, despotism ;  
 And every tongue was weary cursing it.  
 When in the multitude it gather'd strength,  
 And, like an ocean bursting from its bounds,  
 Long beat in vain, went forth resistlessly,  
 It bore the stamp and designation, then,  
 Of popular fury, anarchy, rebellion ;  
 And honest men bewail'd all order void ;  
 All laws annull'd ; all property destroy'd ;  
 The venerable, murder'd in the streets ;  
 The wise, despis'd ; streams, red with human blood ;  
 Harvests, beneath the frantic foot trod down ;  
 Lands, desolate ; and famine at the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ This was earth's liberty, its nature this,  
 However nam'd, in whomsoever found,  
 And found it was in all of woman born,—  
 Each man to make all subject to his will ;  
 To make them do, undo, eat, drink, stand, move,  
 Talk, think, and feel, exactly as he chose.  
 Hence the eternal strife of brotherhoods,

Of individuals, families, commonwealths.  
 The root from which it grew was pride ; bad root,  
 And bad the fruit it bore. Then wonder not,  
 That long the nations from it richly reap'd  
 Oppression, slavery, tyranny, and war ;  
 Confusion, desolation, trouble, shame.  
 And marvellous though it seem, this monster, when  
 It took the name of slavery, as oft  
 It did, had advocates to plead its cause ;  
 Beings that walk'd erect, and spoke like men ;  
 Of Christian parentage descended, too,  
 And dipp'd in the baptismal font, as sign  
 Of dedication to the Prince who bow'd  
 To death, to set the sin-bound prisoner free.

“ Unchristian thought ! on what pretence soe'er  
 Of right, inherited, or else acquir'd ;  
 Of loss, or profit, or what plea you name,  
 To buy and sell, to barter, whip, and hold  
 In chains, a being of celestial make ;  
 Of kindred form, of kindred faculties,  
 Of kindred feelings, passions, thoughts, desires ;  
 Born free, and heir of an immortal hope ;  
 Thought villanous, absurd, detestable !  
 Unworthy to be harbour'd in a fiend !  
 And only overreach'd in wickedness  
 By that, birth too of earthly liberty,  
 Which aim'd to make a reasonable man  
 By legislation think, and by the sword  
 Believe. This was that liberty renown'd,  
 Those equal rights of Greece and Rome, where men,  
 All, but a few, were bought, and sold, and scourg'd,  
 And kill'd, as interest or caprice enjoin'd ;  
 In aftertimes talk'd of, written of, so much,  
 That most, by sound and custom led away,

Believ'd the essence answer'd to the name.  
 Historians on this theme were long and warm.  
 Statesmen, drunk with the fumes of vain debate,  
 In lofty swelling phrase, call'd it perfection.  
 Philosophers its rise, advance, and fall,  
 Trac'd carefully : and poets kindled still,  
 As memory brought it up ; their lips were touch'd  
 With fire, and utter'd words that men ador'd.  
 Even he, true bard of Zion, holy man !  
 To whom the Bible taught this precious verse,  
 ' He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,'  
 By fashion (though by fashion little sway'd)  
 Scarce kept his harp from pagan freedom's praise.

" The captive prophet, whom Jehovah gave  
 The future years, describ'd it best, when he  
 Beheld it rise in vision of the night :  
 A dreadful beast, and terrible, and strong  
 Exceedingly, with mighty iron teeth ;  
 And, lo, it brake in pieces, and devour'd,  
 And stamp'd the residue beneath its feet !

" True liberty was Christian, sanctified,  
 Baptiz'd, and found in Christian hearts alone ;  
 First-born of Virtue, daughter of the skies,  
 Nursling of truth divine, sister of all  
 The graces, meekness, holiness, and love ;  
 Giving to God, and man, and all below,  
 That symptom show'd of sensible existence,  
 Their due, unask'd ; fear to whom fear was due ;  
 To all, respect, benevolence, and love :  
 Companion of religion, where she came,  
 There freedom came ; where dwelt, there freedom  
 dwelt ;  
 Rul'd where she rul'd, expir'd where she expir'd."

The parallel in the genius, the principles, and the fate of Henry Kirke White and Robert Pollok, is not more remarkable than that manifested in two illustrious young poets of a different metaphysical school, whose imaginative powers were of the very highest range, and whose verse was of unsurpassed melody,—John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. The discipline of life to each was stern and bitter, beyond the usual experience even of genius.

John Keats published his first lengthened poem, "Endymion," in 1818, when he was twenty-one or twenty-two years of age. Determined to be free of all trammels, he constructed this poem in a wild unmeasured style and stanza. It abounds in the faults and beauties of youth and genius, exuberant, luxuriant, unpruned; a tangled wilderness, yet a wilderness of sweets. A deprecating preface, gentle as the poet's heart, and fervid as his brain, appealed to critic and reader for indulgence and sympathy. Alas! appealed in vain. One of the most severe reviews that ever critic penned appeared in the "Quarterly." Scorn, contempt, ridicule, blended in that article, even while the critic gravely told his readers he had not read the poem he so abused! He defended himself from the charge of inconsistency by pleading the utter impossibility of reading it.

Keats with the fullest measure of a poet's ima

gination, had an equal share of susceptibility. His health, also, was delicate; and when this review appeared, it produced a most violent agitation of his mind and frame, that ended in the rupture of a bloodvessel in the lungs, and consumption ensued. He went to Italy in search of health and tranquillity, and found neither. Poetry, at once his joy and sorrow, was the occupation of his life. His "Eve of St. Agnes" has been admitted by all real lovers of poetry not only to contain passages of unsurpassed descriptive power, but, as a whole, to be complete in loveliness. The story is founded on a superstition connected with the legend of St. Agnes, who, according to old chronicles, was a Roman virgin who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Dioclesian. The superstition is, that on the eve of her festival, by taking certain plans of divination, or incantation, maidens will have a vision in which their future husband will be revealed to them. In the story of Keats a real lover takes advantage of the superstition to present himself to his beloved, to plead his cause, and bear her off as his bride.

The description of Madeline entering her chamber, extinguishing her light, kneeling to prayer while the moonbeams on the painted window of the chamber threw richest colours over the kneeling maiden,—the unrobing and retiring to rest, are all described with a pure spiritual grace

that etherealises the tender human interest of the poem.

“ Out went the taper as she hurried in ;  
 Its little smoke in pallid moonshine died :  
 She clos'd the door, she panteth all akin  
 To spirits of the air and visions wide,  
 Nor utter'd syllable, or ‘ woe betide ! ’  
 But to her heart her heart was voluble,  
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side :  
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell  
 Her throat in vain, and die heart-stifed in her dell.

“ A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,  
 All garlanded with carven images  
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,  
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,  
 Innumerable, of stains and splendid dyes,  
 As are the tiger-moth's deep damask'd wings ;  
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,  
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,  
 A shielded 'scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and  
 kings.

“ Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon :  
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands together press'd,  
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
 And on her hair a glory like a saint ;  
 She seem'd a splendid angel newly drest,  
 Save wings, for heaven.— Porphyro grew faint,  
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from all taint.

“ Anon his heart revives, her vespers  
 Of all its wreathed pearls her hair . . .

Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;  
 Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees  
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :  
 Half hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,  
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees  
 In fancy fair Saint Agnes in her bed,  
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

“ Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
 In sort of wakeful swoon perplex'd she lay,  
 Until the popped warmth of sleep oppress'd  
 Her smoothed limbs, and soul, fatigued away,  
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow day ;  
 Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;  
 Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;  
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
 As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.”

Keats died in Rome 1821, at the age of twenty-four or twenty-five. His “Hyperion,” a fragment, has been called by an eminent brother poet, “second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.” Though sorrows of many kinds gathered round the poet’s death-bed, he was soothed as far as human sympathy could impart comfort by the constant affection of a devoted friend, Mr. Severn, a young artist who had accompanied him to Italy, and who, neglecting everything else, attended on his dying friend with a tender friendship, like that which made Israel’s bard exclaim, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” The death of Keats called forth a remarkable and beautiful poem—“Adonais,” from

one competent to estimate his genius and his sorrows.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, born 1792, whose brief life passed in storms and sorrows, and ended violently; has left a name indelibly imprinted among the lofty poets of his land. The influence of his great original genius is felt, not only when we read his own poems, but it pervades the writings of every metaphysical poet of our own time.

Shelley, during his life, was not only misunderstood by others, but it is evident, in some particulars, he misunderstood himself. The most spiritual and ethereal of modern poets, he rashly gave in his adhesion to the theories of sceptical philosophers, who "of the earth earthy," like the Sadducees of old, believed in neither "angel nor spirit." Shelley, to whom the whole universe was vocal with spirit-voices, who heard them at all times and from all sources, whose own soul had so little of the dross of earth about it that he seemed fitted to hold communion with beings of a finer mould, — yet stood

"In his white ideal  
All statue-blind,"

as far as perception of the authority and loveliness of the Christian faith is concerned! Why this blindness? Persecution from his childhood had seared his mental vision. He was by



turns throughout his whole life the victim of parental, scholastic, and legal tyranny. Religion was a word ever on the lips of his oppressors — a word rendered odious to him by their conduct. He seems never to have seen Christianity really embodied in the life of its professors. Lord Bacon's remark, "It were better to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of him," may be carried still further—it were better Christianity had no disciples at all than such as serve only to bring it into contempt.

Shelley was of a singularly affectionate, gentle, impulsive, yet resolute spirit. Love he could never have resisted—persecution made him unyielding. At Eton his sense of justice was shocked at the fagging system, and he refused on principle to fag, and became in consequence the victim of tyrants old and young—masters and pupils. This first experiment roused the martyr spirit, and confirmed him the antagonist of tyranny, or what he thought such, in every form. College life was equally repugnant to him. Hollow profession and sleek hypocrisy he thought he detected at every turn. He wrote, at the age of eighteen, in the wild effervescence of his feelings, a dramatic poem, "Queen Mab," that attacked at random all that to his heated imagination seemed wrong. This poem he never published; it was printed for private circulation among his friends.

He was expelled the university, and disinherited as far as parental anger could disinherit an heir at law. An imprudent and unfortunate marriage, and legal difficulties, followed. His name was stigmatised, his character and principles misrepresented and distorted. He left his native land, never to return, in 1818. While hatred and calumny were busy with his name, and his own rashness aided their malice, — while multitudes were taught to think only of him as a monster, the few who knew him idolised him. Like many men of exceedingly gentle spirit, he wrote strongly. Seldom apt, in speaking, to use words too vehemently, and rarely erring in daily intercourse from severity, such men are less liable to restrain their written style, or to be watchful over the force of their expressions. It is a gratifying fact that Shelley's second wife (the daughter of celebrated parents, Mary Wolstoncroft and William Godwin) was in all respects a congenial spirit — that in her love he found all the solace that human sympathy could give to a soul like his. Shelley, in the midst of some of nature's loveliest scenes in lands of old renown, continued to write, heedless that the world continued to rail. His wife, in the graceful, pathetic, and most temperate commentary, appended to her edition of his works, remarks, in reference to the youthful poem that produced such bitter fruit to

the writer, "It is a singular fact in the history of society in the civilised nations of modern times, that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth."

It is certain that he saw reason to regret that first poem, and that maturing judgment had modified his opinions, for when, without his authority, this early poem was made public, he immediately wrote thus to a leading journal:—

"A poem entitled 'Queen Mab' was written by me at the age of eighteen, I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit—but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years; I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition, and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation as well as in the subtler discrimination of metaphysical and religious doctrine it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression, and I regret this poem not so much from literary vanity as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale."\*

Those who judged him so harshly, and who even yet regard his name with doubt approaching to dislike, would do well to remember that if, when the Divine Teacher was on earth, he had

\* Letter to the Editor of the Examiner, June 22. 1821.

need to reprove his most loving and beloved disciples, as they wished fire to come down and consume the Samaritans, saying, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of;" that a similar reproof is often needed now, and would be far more likely to be given, as of old, for a want, than an excess of charity.

His widow says of him, "He had been from youth the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution; and believing firmly in the justice and excellence of his views, it cannot be wondered that a nature as sensitive, as impetuous, and as generous as his, should put its whole force into the attempt to alleviate for others the evils of those systems from which he had himself suffered. Many advantages attended his birth; he spurned them all when balanced with what he considered his duties. He was generous to imprudence, devoted to heroism."\*

"Through life also he was a martyr to ill-health, and constant pain wound up his nerves to a pitch of susceptibility that rendered his views of life different from those of a man in the enjoyment of healthy sensations."

There is for the most part an absence of distinct human interest in his noblest poems. His imagination soared into the region of the spiritual,

\* The Poetical Works of P. B. Shelley, edited by Mrs. Shelley, Preface, p. 9.

and even where his themes were of earth and its darkest passions, as in his grand dramatic efforts, he sublimated and etherealised until perhaps only the highly imaginative could follow him. This peculiarity has made him the poet of poets. They read his dreamy musings, share his enchanted reverie, enjoy the sensuous spirituality of his imagery, and revel in the voluptuous melody of his verse. No wonder, then, that the instructed reader often catches a tone of his voice, a subtle interflowing of his imagery, in the lays of many a gifted living poet, male and female. And of these poets, the more devotional their spirit, the more decidedly Christian their stanzas, the more this influence is manifest.

Some of Shelley's shorter poems are entirely inimitable and unequalled. "The Cloud," "The Sensitive Plant," "The Skylark," are of this class. They may be ranked as gems, rarest among the rare. "The Cloud" was composed in England, as in his boat he floated on the bosom of the Thames, and gazed on the fleecy drapery of the sky. "The Skylark" was written in Italy. Mrs. Shelley says, "In the spring of 1820 we spent a week or two near Leghorn, borrowing the house of some friends who were absent on a journey to England. It was on a beautiful summer evening, while wandering among the lanes where myrtle hedges were the bowers of the fire-flies,

that we heard the carolling of the skylark, which inspired one of the most beautiful of his poems.”

## TO A SKYLARK.

“ Hail to thee, blithe spirit !  
 Bird thou never wert,  
 That from heaven, or near it,  
 Pourest thy full heart  
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

“ Higher still and higher,  
 From the earth thou springest,  
 Like a cloud of fire !  
 The blue deep thou wingest,  
 And singing, still dost soar ; and soaring, ever singest.

“ In the golden lightning  
 Of the sunken sun,  
 O'er which clouds are bright'ning,  
 Thou dost float and run ;  
 Like an embodied joy, whose race has just begun.

“ The pale purple even  
 Melts around thy flight ;  
 Like a star of heaven  
 In the broad daylight,  
 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

“ Keen as are the arrows  
 Of that silver sphere  
 Whose intense lamp narrows  
 In the white dawn clear,  
 Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

“ All the earth and air  
 With thy voice is loud,  
 As, when night is bare,  
 From one lonely cloud  
 The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflow'd.

“ What thou art we know not.  
 What is most like thee ?  
 From rainbow clouds there flow not  
 Drops so bright to see,  
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

“ Like a poet hidden  
 In the light of thought,  
 Singing hymns unbidden,  
 Till the world is wrought  
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

“ Like a high-born maiden  
 In a palace tower,  
 Soothing her love-laden  
 Soul, in secret hour,  
 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower.

“ Like a glow-worm golden  
 In a dell of dew,  
 Scattering un beholden  
 Its aërial hue  
 Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the  
 view.

“ Like a rose embower'd  
 In its own green leaves,  
 By warm winds deflower'd,  
 Till the scent it gives  
 Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged  
 thieves.

“ Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awaken'd flowers,  
All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

“ Teach me, sprite or bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine ;  
I have never heard  
Praise of love or wine  
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

“ Chorus hymeneal,  
Or triumphal chaunt,  
Match'd with thine would be all  
But an empty vaunt —  
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

“ What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain ?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?  
What shapes of sky or plain ?  
What love of thine own kind ? What ignorance of pain ?

“ With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be ;  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee :  
Thou lovest ; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

“ Waking or asleep,  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream,  
Or how could thy note flow in such a crystal stream ?



“ We look before and after,  
 And pine for what is not ;  
 Our sincerest laughter  
 With some pain is fraught ;  
 Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought.

“ Yet if we could scorn  
 Hate, and pride, and fear ;  
 If we were things born  
 Not to shed a tear,  
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

“ Better than all measures  
 Of delightful sound,  
 Better than all treasures  
 That in books are found,  
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground.

“ Teach me half the gladness  
 That thy brain must know,  
 Such harmonious madness  
 From my lips would flow,  
 The world should listen then as I am listening now.

The “ Adonais,” written in memory of Keats, one year before Shelley’s own death, is not only remarkable in itself for beauty and appropriateness, but as embodying the thoughts of one who was soon to share the grave of the poet he lamented. Mozart’s “ Requiem ” was not more prophetic than this poem. Each line applied to one, suits both. How accurate the description!—

“ Midst others of less note came one frail form,  
 A phantom among men ; companionless  
 As the last cloud of an expiring storm,  
 Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,

Had gaz'd on nature's naked loveliness  
 Acteon-like, and now he fled astray,  
 With feeble steps, o'er the world's wilderness,  
 And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,  
 Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their  
 prey.

“ A pard-like spirit beautiful and swift!  
 A love in desolation mask'd ; a power  
 Girt round with weakness ; it can scarce uplift  
 The weight of the superincumbent hour ;  
 It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,  
 A breaking billow ; even while we speak  
 Is it not broken ? On the withering flower  
 The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek  
 The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may  
 break.

“ His head was bound with pansies overblown,  
 And faded violets white, and pied, and blue ;  
 And a light spear topp'd with a cypress cone,  
 Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew,  
 Yet dripping with the forest's noontide dew,  
 Vibrated as the ever-beating heart  
 Shook the weak hand that grasped ; of that crew  
 He came the last, neglected and apart ;  
 A herd-abandon'd deer, struck by the hunter's dart.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Equally appropriate to Shelley himself are the  
 following stanzas :—

“ The splendours of the firmament of Time  
 May be eclips'd, but are extinguish'd not ;  
 Like stars to their appointed height they climb ;  
 And death is a low mist which cannot blot

The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought  
 Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,  
 And love and life contend in it, for what  
 Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there,  
 And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air."

The concluding lines remarkably foreshadow Shelley's approaching fate.

"The breath whose might I have evok'd in song  
 Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven  
 Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
 Whose sails were never to the tempest given;  
 The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!  
 I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;  
 Whilst burning through the inmost veil of heaven,  
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
 Beacons from the abode where the eternal are."

The last poem Shelley wrote was mostly composed in the fatal boat in which he perished; it was called "THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE." The last lines he penned were—

\* \* \* "Thus on the way  
 Mask after mask fell from the countenance  
 And form of all, and long before the day  
 Was old, the joy which wak'd like heaven's glance  
 The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died;  
 And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,  
 And fell, as I have fallen, by the way side,—  
 Those soonest from whose forms most shadows past,  
 And least of strength and beauty did abide.  
 Then, what is life? I cried."—

Shelley all his life had a passion for boating. The record of the poet's death has been given by his wife as no one else could give it.

“On the 1st of July they left us. If ever shadow of future ill darkened the present hour, such was over my mind when they went. I did not anticipate danger for them, but a vague expectation of evil shook me to agony, and I could scarcely bring myself to let them go. The day was calm and clear, and a fine breeze rising at twelve, they weighed for Leghorn: they made the run of about fifty miles in seven hours and a half. The Bolivar was in port, and the regulations of the health-office not permitting them to go on shore after sunset, they borrowed cushions from the larger vessel, and slept on board their boat. They spent a week at Pisa and Leghorn. The want of rain was severely felt in the country. The weather continued sultry and fine. I have heard that Shelley all this time was in brilliant spirits. Not long before, talking of presentiments, he had said the only one that he ever found infallible was the certain advent of some evil fortune when he felt peculiarly joyous. Yet if ever fate whispered of coming disaster, such inaudible, but not unfelt, prognostics hovered around us. The beauty of the place seemed unearthly in its excess; the distance we were at from all signs of civilisation, the sea at our feet, its murmurs or its roarings for ever in our ears,—all these things led the mind to brood over strange thoughts, and, lifting it from every-day life, caused it to be familiar with the unreal. A sort of spell surrounded us, and each day, as the voyagers did not return, we grew restless and disquieted, and yet, strange to say, we were not fearful of the most apparent danger. The spell snapped, it was all over! an interval of agonizing

doubt — of days passed in miserable journeys to gain tidings, of hopes that took firmer root, even as they were more senseless — were changed to the certainty of the death which eclipsed all happiness for the survivors for evermore.

There was something in our fate peculiarly harrowing. The remains of those we lost were cast on shore; but by the quarantine laws of the coast we were not permitted to have possession of them, — the laws with respect to every thing cast on land by the sea, being, that such should be burnt, to prevent the possibility of any relic bringing plague into Italy; and no representation could alter the law. At length, through the kind and unwearied exertions of Mr. Dawkins, our charge d’Affaires at Florence, we gained permission to receive the ashes after the bodies were consumed. Nothing could equal the zeal of Trelawney in carrying our wishes into effect. He was indefatigable in his exertions, and full of forethought and sagacity in his arrangements. It was a fearful task. He stood before us at last, his hands scorched and blistered by the flames of the funeral pyre, and by touching the burnt relics as he placed them into the receptacles prepared for the purpose. And there, in compass of that small case, was gathered all that remained on earth of him whose genius and virtue were a crown of glory to the world — whose love had been the source of happiness, peace, and good, to be buried with him.” — *Shelley’s Poems (Moxon’s Edition)*, vol. iv. p. 232.

It is significant of the force of prejudice against the name of Shelley, that it was thought advisable to allow some years to elapse before his collected works, edited by his widow, were given to the public. Thus, though he died in 1822, an authorised edition of his poems did not appear until

1839. In these seventeen intervening years many political and literary changes had occurred. Less dictation and more inquiry became apparent. The truly pious—at all times the truly merciful—never thought it necessary to laud themselves by sweeping condemnation of others. They always saw that persecution had caused and confirmed all they mourned over as Shelley's speculative errors. His sorrows and wrongs were bitter enough to propitiate even those who were —

“ Severe by rule, and not by nature kind.”

The fact, too, that he was but twenty-nine when his troubled career closed, will ever plead with the thoughtful and the good in extenuation of his opinions. Nobly has Mrs. Hemans sung, —

“ Oh ! judge with thoughtful tenderness of those  
 Who richly dower'd for earth are call'd to die  
 Ere the soul's flame through storms hath won repose  
 In truth's divinest ether pure and high.  
 Let their mind's riches claim a trustful sigh ;  
 Deem them but sad, sweet fragments of a strain,  
 First notes of some yet struggling harmony,  
 By the strong rush, the mingled joy and pain  
 Of many inspirations, met and held  
 From its true sphere. Oh, soon it would have swell'd  
 Majestically forth. Nor doubt that He,  
 Whose touch mysterious may on earth dissolve,  
 Such links of music elsewhere will evolve,  
 The grand consummate hymn from passion's gusts made  
 free.”

CHAP. XIX.

POETICAL CONTROVERSIES OF THE PRESENT AGE.—CONFLICTING THEORIES.—LAKE SCHOOL.—WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, LORD BYRON, SIR WALTER SCOTT. CAMPBELL, AND MOORE.

THE return to truth and nature (at the end of the last century, after a long period of coldness and sterility), which had been brought about principally by Crabbe, Cowper, and Burns, was neither so unnoticed or unfelt by the public mind as to pass quietly without comment. The age had grown critical. Not merely the usages of poets, but poetry in the abstract, began to be the subject of many theories and speculations among readers, who, in former times, would have contented themselves with quietly and gratefully taking

“The good the gods provide.”

rather than investigating and analysing it.

It was one result, equally excellent and natural, of our ample periodical literature, that analysis and speculation should increase; and when it was found that the first poets and critics of the age differed essentially as to their theory and estimate of poetry, and the poetic, it is no wonder that controversy should arise, that disputants should be warm, and that parties should be formed.

There is nothing that the world more constantly demands, and more frequently rejects, than originality. The world sets up standards, prescribes limits, lays down plans for genius:—genius! that neither can be formed, or bounded, or moulded by any mental laws but those of its own being. If any thing in this world has distinctness of individuality it is genius; and yet it is contrasted, compared, derided, and rejected, by rules equally false and presumptuous. No wonder that the unthinking err in this matter, for the wise themselves have here often gone astray. Not a single great poet of the present age has escaped the infliction of carping criticism. Many now venerated names were greeted by a perfect storm of ridicule on their first appearance, and that, not by the merely incompetent, who can only praise or blame at the suggestion of others, but by the educated, the studious, and the gifted.

William Wordsworth is, perhaps, the poet who, beyond all others, was the subject of this controversy. He looked on the circumstances of ordinary life with an eye as microscopic as that of Crabbe, and a soul far more capacious and reflective. His aim was not merely to describe, but to analyse the effects of outward objects on his own mind, what they suggested for meditation, when

“They flash upon the inward eye,  
That makes the bliss of solitude.”



He had lofty and noble views of the mission of the poet, as a teacher and reformer among men, — a revealer of something higher and better than society had attained to. This object Wordsworth sought to promote, not by hymns of orphic melody, or wild imaginative flights in superhuman regions, but by calm pictures of innocent, tranquil beauty, pure affections, holy domestic duties and sympathies. Communion with God and his own soul was to him evidently as much a delight as a duty, — a law of his being that he could not contravene. Happily, circumstances in his case favoured the full development and indulgence of all his tastes and theories. Rarely has any life had such harmonious completeness: happy in childhood and youth; fortunate in congenial friends and family connections; enabled to travel in early manhood, and confirm or correct his opinions of society, government, and literature; happy in his marriage and domestic circle; able to settle down amid the scenery and quietude he loved, and to give himself up unrestrainedly to his favourite contemplations. His life was as full of the quiet glow of healthy happiness as his writings: indeed, it was his idea that a poet's life was written in his poems; and that was evidently his own case. Happy, therefore, for the world was the happiness of Wordsworth. His relative and biographer says,

“The influence exercised by Wordsworth's poetry is due

in great measure to his home, as well as to his heart. He was blessed, in a remarkable degree, in all those domestic relations which exercise and hallow the affections. His cottage, its beautiful neighbourhood, the happiness he enjoyed in its garden, and within its doors, all these breathed a moral music into his heart, and enabled him to pour forth strains which, without such influences upon him, would have been unheard, and which have made him what he is in an eminent degree, the poet of domestic life, and the teacher of domestic virtue.\*

The only untoward circumstance of Wordsworth's life was the determined and long-continued hostility of criticism. The leaders of the public taste censured both the subjects he selected and his treatment of them; the first they thought grovelling, the latter puerile. Affectation of simplicity was the chief charge. However impressed the public mind might be for a time, the poet himself was wholly unmoved. His opinions of his harsh critics were pretty definitely expressed in a noble letter to his friend Lady Beaumont:—

“Be assured that the decision of these persons (the reviewers), has nothing to do with the question; they are altogether incompetent judges. These people, in the senseless hurry of their idle lives, do not *read* books; they merely snatch a glance at them that they may talk about them. And even if this were not so, never forget what, I believe, was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must

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\* Wordsworth's Life, vol. i. p. 373.

create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen; this, in a certain degree, even to all persons, however wise and pure may be their lives, and however unvitiated their taste. But for those who dip into books in order to give an opinion of them, or talk about them to take up an opinion,—for this multitude of unhappy, and misguided, and misleading beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be the work of *time*. To conclude, my ears are stone dead to this idle buzz, and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings.” \*

Wordsworth’s estimate of the capability of the age to enjoy poetry was not high.

“It is an awful truth, that there neither is, nor can be, any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world,—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God.” †

It is well known that Wordsworth fixed his residence at the lakes. He says,—

“And, oh, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
Think not of any severing of our loves!  
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might.  
I only have relinquish’d one delight,

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\* Life of Wordsworth, vol. i. p. 338, 339.

† Letter to Lady Beaumont, Life of Wordsworth, vol. i. p. 332.

To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
 E'en more than when I tripp'd lightly as they ;  
 The innocent brightness of a new-born day,  
     Is lovely yet ;  
 The clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;  
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

His "Ode to Duty" is worthy of being studied  
 for its profound moral.

## ODE TO DUTY.

" Stern Daughter of the Voice of God !  
 O Duty ! if that name thou love,  
 Who art a Light to guide, a Rod  
 To check the erring, and reprove ;  
 Thou, who art victory and law  
 When empty terrors overawe ;  
 From vain temptations dost set free,  
 From strife and from despair ; a glorious ministry.

" There are who ask not if thine eye  
 Be on them ; who, in love and truth,  
 Where no misgiving is, rely  
 Upon the genial sense of youth .  
 Glad Hearts ! without reproach or blot  
 Who do thy work, and know it not :

May joy be theirs while life shall last !  
 And Thou, if they should totter, teach them to stand  
 fast !

“ Serene will be our days and bright,  
 And happy will our nature be,  
 When love is an unerring light,  
 And joy its own security.  
 And bless'd are they who in the main,  
 This faith, even now, do entertain ;  
 Live in the spirit of this creed ;  
 Yet find that other strength, according to their need.

“ I, loving freedom, and untried ;  
 No sport of every random gust,  
 Yet being to myself a guide,  
 Too blindly have repos'd my trust :  
 Resolv'd that nothing e'er should press  
 Upon my present happiness,  
 I shov'd unwelcome tasks away ;  
 But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

“ Through no disturbance of my soul,  
 Or strong compunction in me wrought,  
 I supplicate for thy controul ;  
 But in the quietness of thought :  
 Me this uncharter'd freedom tires ;  
 I feel the weight of chance-desires :  
 My hopes no more must change their name,  
 I long for a repose which ever is the same.

“ Yet not the less would I throughout  
 Still act according to the voice  
 Of my own wish ; and feel past doubt,  
 That my submissiveness was choice :

Not seeking in the school of pride  
 For 'precepts over dignified,'  
 Denial and restraint I prize,  
 No farther than they breed a second Will, more wise.

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear  
 The Godhead's most benignant grace;  
 Nor know we any thing so fair  
 As is the smile upon thy face;  
 Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;  
 And Fragrance in thy footing treads;  
 Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
 And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are  
 fresh and strong.

"To humbler functions, awful Power!  
 I call thee: I myself commend  
 Unto thy guidance from this hour;  
 Oh! let my weakness have an end!  
 Give unto me, made lowly wise,  
 The spirit of self-sacrifice;  
 The confidence of reason give;  
 And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live!"

Nothing can well be more beautiful, either in  
 description or lyric flow, than his stanzas on

#### THE POWER OF MUSIC.

"An Orpheus! an Orpheus!—yes, Faith may grow cold,  
 And take to herself all the wonders of old;—  
 Near the stately Pantheon you'll meet with the same  
 In the street that from Oxford hath borrow'd its name.

"His station is there;—and he works on the crowd,  
 He sways them with harmony merry and loud;  
 He fills with his power all their hearts to the brim—  
 Was aught ever heard like his fiddle and him?"

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- “ What an eager assembly! what an empire is this!  
The weary have life, and the hungry have bliss;  
The mourner is cheered, the anxious have rest;  
And the guilt-burthen'd soul is no longer opprest.
- “ As the Moon brightens round her the clouds of the night,  
So he, where he stands, is a centre of light;  
It gleams on the face, there, of dusky-fac'd Jack,  
And the pale-visag'd Baker's, with basket on back.
- “ That errand-bound 'Prentice was passing in haste—  
What matter! he's caught—and his time runs to waste—  
The Newsman is stopp'd, though he stops on the fret,  
And the half-breathless Lamp-lighter he's in the net!
- “ The Porter sits down on the weight which he bore;  
The Lass with a barrow wheels hither her store;—  
If a Thief could be here he might pilfer with ease;  
She sees the Musician, 'tis all that she sees!
- “ He stands, back'd by the wall;—he abates not his din;  
His hat gives him vigour, with boons dropping in,  
From the old and the young, the poorest—and there!  
The one-pennied boy has his penny to spare.
- “ O blest are the hearers, and proud be the hand  
Of the pleasure it spreads through so thankful a band;  
I am glad for him, blind as he is!—all the while  
If they speak 'tis to praise, and they praise with a smile.
- “ That tall Man, a giant in bulk and in height,  
Not an inch of his body is free from delight;  
Can he keep himself still, if he would? oh, not he!  
The music stirs in him like wind through a tree.

"There's a Cripple that leans on his crutch; like a tower  
That long has lean'd forward, leans hour after hour! —  
A Mother whose spirit in fetters is bound,  
While she dandles the babe in her arms to the sound.

"Now, Coaches and Chariots! roar on like a stream;  
Here are twenty souls happy as souls in a dream:  
They are deaf to your murmurs — they care not for you,  
Nor what ye are flying, or what ye pursue!"

The beauty of the region in which Wordsworth settled induced many of his literary friends, and among them more than one poet of eminence, to settle there: Coleridge and Southey were of this number. It was known that these great men, as well as Wordsworth, entertained very different ideas of poetry, and of the mission of the poet, from those that had been rendered popular by the critics; and arguing from the fact of their residing in the same region, it was rumoured that "a new school of poetry" was forming, and the "Lake School" became a popular phrase, that was caught up, and passed current from lip to lip without examination. In truth, except in their reverence for virtue, and for natural and revealed religion, no minds could be more dissimilar and distinct from each other than those three, so frequently classed together as the "Lakists." Wordsworth's was the triumph of contemplative goodness; Coleridge's of lofty imagination, clothed in quaint, graceful, sweetly involved melodies. "His language," said a critic,



“is the very music of thought.” While Southey, as if tired of measures that other poets had tried, sought new combinations of rhythm and stanza, and put his strong and noble thoughts in verse, whose cadence, pauses, and terminations were unlike all other English poetry. “Thalaba,” “the wild and wondrous tale,” is a unique specimen. But original and majestic as this and other efforts were,—his English hexameters for instance,—most readers prefer his muse when he condescended to ordinary measures. Some of his shorter poems are not only admirable as poems, but contain a deep meaning, that appeals to the conscience of the reader.

It was idle to speak of these distinguished and distinct writers *en masse*. They had little in common but the woods and hills, the lakes and valleys. This dissimilarity is rendered more apparent, if indeed any testimony but their own writings were needed, by the accounts recently given in the Life of Wordsworth of his intercourse with his poetic friends and neighbours. Wordsworth’s readings of some South Sea voyages, and his conversations thereon with Coleridge, suggested the idea of the “Ancient Mariner” to the latter. They agreed at first to write the poem conjointly; but before many lines had been composed it became apparent to each, particularly Wordsworth, that the different character of their

minds forbade a partnership in literary labour. It was surely better for both and for the world that they each separately and freely wrought out their own idea. Coleridge has left us some poems of perfect loveliness. A distinguished poet and critic\* says of him, "Of pure poetry, strictly so called, that is to say, consisting of nothing but its essential self, without conventional and perishing helps, he was the greatest master of his time." The following exquisite poem, though by no means his best, is best adapted for quotation. The reader will remark the delightful and musical repetitions, as if the poet lingered enchanted on certain words, and wove and interwove them to prolong the flowing melody.

## LOVE.

" All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
 Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
 Are all but ministers of Love,  
 And feed his sacred flame.

" Oft in my waking dreams do I  
 Live o'er again that happy hour,  
 When midway on the mount I lay,  
 Beside the ruin'd tower.

" The moonlight stealing o'er the scene,  
 Had blended with the lights of eve ;  
 And she was there, my hope, my joy,  
 My own dear Genevieve !

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\* Leigh Hunt.

“ She leant against the armed man,  
 The statue of the armed knight ;  
 She stood and listen'd to my lay,  
 Amid the lingering light.

“ Few sorrows hath she of her own,  
 My hope, my joy, my Genevieve !  
 She loves me best whene'er I sing  
 The songs that make her grieve.

“ I play'd a soft and doleful air,  
 I sang an old and moving story—  
 An old rude song, that suited well  
 That ruin wild and hoary.

“ She listen'd with a fitting blush,  
 With downcast eyes and modest grace,  
 For well she knew I could not choose  
 But gaze upon her face.

“ I told her of the knight that wore  
 Upon his shield a burning brand ;  
 And that for ten long years he woo'd  
 The lady of the land.

“ I told her how he pin'd, and—ah !  
 The deep, the low, the pleading tone  
 With which I sang another's love,  
 Interpreted my own.

“ She listen'd with a fitting blush,  
 With downcast eyes and modest grace,  
 And she forgave me, that I gaz'd  
 Too fondly on her face !

“ But when I told the cruel scorn  
That craz'd that bold and lovely knight,  
And that he cross'd the mountain-woods,  
Nor rested day nor night ;

“ That sometimes from the savage den,  
And sometimes from the darkest shade,  
And sometimes, starting up at once  
In green and sunny glade,

“ There came and look'd him in the face,  
An angel beautiful and bright ;  
And that he knew it was a fiend,  
This miserable knight !

“ And that unknowing what he did,  
He leap'd amid a murderous band,  
And sav'd from outrage worse than death  
The lady of the land !

“ And how she wept and claspt his knees,  
And how she tended him in vain —  
And ever strove to expiate  
The scorn that craz'd his brain ;

“ And that she nurs'd him in a cave ;  
And how his madness went away,  
When on the yellow forest leaves  
A dying man he lay ; —

“ His dying words — but when I reach'd  
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,  
My faltering voice and pausing harp  
Disturb'd her soul with pity.

“ All impulses of soul and sense  
 Had thrill'd my guileless Genevieve ;  
 The music and the doleful tale,  
 The rich and balmy eve ;

“ And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,  
 An undistinguishable throng,  
 And gentle wishes long subdu'd,  
 Subdu'd and cherish'd long.

“ She wept with pity and delight,  
 She blush'd with love and virgin shame ;  
 And like the murmur of a dream,  
 I heard her breathe my name.

“ Her bosom heav'd — she stept aside,  
 As conscious of my look she stept —  
 Then suddenly, with timorous eye,  
 She fled to me and wept.

“ She half enclos'd me in her arms,  
 She press'd me with a meek embrace ;  
 And bending back her head, look'd up,  
 And gaz'd upon my face.

“ 'Twas partly love and partly fear,  
 And partly 'twas a bashful art,  
 That I might rather feel than see  
 The swelling of her heart.

“ I calm'd her fears, and she was calm,  
 And told her love with virgin pride ;  
 And so I won my Genevieve,  
 My own, my beauteous bride.”

Southey's "Complaints of the Poor" is a specimen of the deep purpose that dwelt even in his short lyrics. There are, however, not a few enlightened readers who prefer his noble prose to his poetic efforts.

The critics, who made themselves merry or angry over these poets,—who discussed "The Lake School," as they called it, and talked of the outraged dignity of the Muse, finding or fancying false theories that were to pervert or subvert our noble English verse, and what was of more importance, our wholesome English poetry, were not, however, more indulgent to a writer of an entirely different kind; equally as original and distinct, and far more immediately popular and influential than the Lake poets—Lord Byron.

Wordsworth's sentiment, that a poet's life is written in his poems, is as true of Byron as of himself. As mortal man cannot choose his destiny, it is a strange injustice that blames and punishes a man for his misfortunes of birth, parentage, education, and social position. Poverty and lowliness has usually been the appointed discipline of the poet; Byron was fated to different but not less severe trials.

Descended from parents whose passions were wild and strong as a tornado—reared by a mother who fostered all she should have checked in her son, and outraged all she should have encouraged

—the beautiful, imaginative, sensitive, crippled boy, grew up an embodiment of the passions. Good and evil were ever wrestling with, and, like the demons of old time, rending him. Early

“Lord of himself, that heritage of woe,”


he sent forth the poetic fancies of his youth under a somewhat unhappy title, “Hours of Idleness,” to the public: unhappy, because the idea suggested by such a title is, that the writer, supposing others to be as idle as himself, means to bestow his tediousness upon them. This bagatelle, giving but little evidence of the great powers latent in the writer, was severely criticised according to the then prevailing style of scarifying fledgling poets. But Lord Byron was not of a temper to submit quietly to the discipline, or die of it, as gentler spirits did. It roused him:

“His soul sprang up astonished! full statur'd in an hour.”

He hurled defiance at the critics; and his satire, “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,” startled society by a revival of all the point, brilliancy, and personality of Pope, combined with a passionate scorn, all Byron's own. From this time he had an audience listening earnestly for his utterances. He had rank, fashion, beauty; but happiness, the heart-wealth, he had not, perhaps never could have, with his peculiar idiosyncrasy and principles. Life

with him was never a healthy contemplative calm ; it was a fitful fever. He was self-centred in an unusual degree. His personal sorrows, wrongs, opinions, passions, his sufferings and his sins, were all interwoven in his poetry. His distinctness, condensation, command of language and imagery, flexibility, and fluency, were obvious ; while his appeals to the passions made him an immediate favourite with the young and the romantic. His sarcasm and misanthropy equally commended him to the large class of the discontented and oppressed.

“Childe Harold, a Pilgrimage,” is not only the most finished, but the most faultless of his many wonderful poems. Rarely has it happened that a work has been so sustained and powerful that was written and published with an interval of three years between the two first and two last cantos. Its descriptions are so just, that they rise to the lip of every traveller that wanders through the region traversed by the Pilgrim,—a personage, by the way, that society could not help confounding with the Author. The philosophy, where it fails to convince, as it often must, stimulates the mind to inquiry, from its powerful demands on the intellect of the reader. No one ever read that poem with a real attention, without receiving mental profit. Byron’s writings benefit the brain ; they rarely improve the heart. His own heart was ill at ease ; and something of its restlessness,





its vague yearning, its unsatisfied throbbing, is communicated to the reader.

Byron was opposed to the new measures of verse, as well as to the new themes of poetry chosen by his before-named gifted contemporaries. He formed his style (except in the "Childe Harold," which is in the Spenserian stanza) much on the model of Pope, and usually adhered to established forms of versification; though, had his sense of the laws of composition permitted him to attempt novelty, it is fair to infer no one would have excelled him, for our language in his hands was flexible as the Italian.

Lord Byron's literary reputation has suffered not only from his personal circumstances, but from the faults and follies of his servile imitators. His great popularity, with the young more particularly — his temperament of mingled scorn and melancholy, perfectly natural to him, only too real in his case — created a morbid taste among his admirers; and, for a time, nothing was poetic but discontent and sorrow. It might be said of him, as he has finely said of Satan, —

"Where he gaz'd, a gloom pervaded space."

The gloom, however, has cleared off, and men in warm sunlight read the poems of the master, and think no more of the follies of the pupils, except to rejoice that as they had not his genius, so they were exempt from his sorrows.

“ Poor, proud Byron! sad as grave,  
And salt as life! forlornly brave,  
And quivering with the dart he drave,”—

is a just description of one whose griefs were so real, that even his laughter dies into a sob, and his passionate fire is quenched in tears. How could a man be otherwise than wretched who believed in such men and such women as his poetry presented?—creatures at once so mighty and so mean, so proud and yet so weak, so exacting yet so unyielding, so sinful yet so severe, so fond and so false, so beautiful and so deceptive.

Lord Byron did not die in absolute youth, but he died before middle age had calmed his passions and matured his judgment.\* His poetry took in a range of about twenty-one years, from the age of sixteen to thirty-seven. That it influenced and yet will influence the mind of the age—that it has a fixed and high place in English literature—no one can doubt who either remembers, reads, or reflects on the mental aspects of the time.

The habit of comparing Lord Byron with Wordsworth, making one the standard by which to judge the other, is as illogical as unjust; all pertaining to them, personally and relatively, was essentially different. What the thoughtful mind has to note is the fact, that great as are the di-

\* Lord Byron died 1824, aged 37.

versities of matter, those of mind are yet greater; and that the world is instructed, not by sameness, but variety.

Sir Walter Scott, who with Lord Byron is the most prominent personage in the literary *tableau* of the age, was well described as "a healthy man." There was a moral and mental symmetry, a proportion and equipoise, manifested equally in his poetic and prose writings. There was neither too much of the active nor the contemplative, just enough of the one to benefit the other. He fed his imagination at pure sources—the old English poets; and without any philosophising on the matter, he went back to the olden time for subjects, and presented them so picturesquely, that all admired the descriptive power, quite as much as the easy tripping music of his pleasant verse. His works are so universally known and read, that comment is unnecessary, and quotation superfluous.

Campbell is the last of our great modern poets who adhered, in the structure of his verse, to the model of Pope, and who sedulously aimed at a perfect polish and correctness according to the rules of eighteenth-century criticism. His "Pleasures of Hope," his "Gertrude of Wyoming," and even yet more his noble lyrics, rank with the very finest productions of the age. Those who knew him best testified that his fault was a tendency to

touch and retouch, to peruse and alter, until he injured rather than improved. He sometimes corrected into tameness. The noble line in "Hohenlinden,"

"Far flashed the *red* artillery,"

was with difficulty saved from his altering, and oftentimes injuring process.

While this tendency might have been in his case carried to excess, it was honourable to the poet. The facilities for publication in the present age are so numerous, that writers are tempted to be on too familiar terms with the public, and to give readers, through the press, slipshod, careless utterances, that would scarcely do for the post-office. To emulate Campbell's genius would be an impossibility; to imitate his example in this respect would often be an advantage to both writers and readers.

There never was a time when our poetic literature abounded more in orientalisms than during the first twenty-five years of the present century. Eastern manners, morals, mind, and life were constantly described. Lord Byron did not alone aid in the formation and spread of this taste. His gifted friend and biographer, Thomas Moore, contributed his share in the composition of Eastern tales, full of all the gorgeous splendour and redundant luxury of the region they described. In

fluency and ease, perfect finish, luxuriance, and happy turns of expression, no poet of his time surpassed Moore. His own genial nature made him too often mistake pleasure for the business of the poet, and his exuberant fancy heaped up sweets until the reader was ready to exclaim, in his own words,

“ There’s a beauty for ever unchangingly bright,  
Like the long sunny lapse of a summer day’s light,  
Shining on—shining on, by no shadow made tender,  
Till love falls asleep in that sameness of splendour.”

Yet, notwithstanding this luxurious, superfluous affluence of sweets, whenever patriotism and tenderness need words, some of Moore’s stanzas will rise to the lips as most appropriate, expressive, and affecting.

## CHAP. XX.

LITERATURE AMONG THE PEOPLE.—POETS AND PROSE WRITERS OF THE POOR.—ASPECTS OF LITERATURE IN THE PRESENT TIME.—LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS.—THOUGHTS ON READING.

THERE has been a great deal both of insolence and vulgarity displayed in the wonder expressed when a man in humble life has contributed to the treasures of our literature. Many, in reading the poems of Burns, were constantly thinking rather of the ploughman than the poet; and instead of feeling additional reverence for one who had known the sterner discipline of life, and manfully endured it, a stupid wonder that such thoughts should have visited a peasant has been the uppermost feeling; forgetting that the thoughts would have been as rare and beautiful if they had visited a prince. The words "republic of letters," though a frequent phrase on the lip, is not so intelligible, it seems, to the mind. If that phrase were believed as embodying a fact, there would be less wonder and more reverence in studying the literature contributed by men and women of the people.

A reading public has led, as a tolerably necessary consequence, to a writing public—and, for

the most part, to an earnest, vigorous writing public.

That great minds should arise among those who are termed "the people," is no new thing in literature. Shakspeare's name is a patent of nobility for his low-born brethren, greater far than Herald's College can hunt up, or ratify. Every age supplies a comment to the speech of prejudice, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" if people will only "come and see."

It must be owned, however, that prior to the present time, in most cases when remarkable natural gifts were bestowed on a man, they did not always aid him to feel that the ties of brotherhood with the people were knit the stronger. He felt himself "with them but not of them;" and claiming kindred not only with higher natures, as was his right, but with the more fortunate in the social scale, he forgot, as well as left, his lowly brethren. Thus it happens, that though one of the leading critics, as well as one of the most truthful poets, of the end of the last and beginning of the present century, — William Gifford (long editor of the Quarterly) and George Crabbe, were by birth among the humblest of the humble; yet the social position they attained so ignored or shrouded their origin, that we rarely hear them quoted among the gifted sons of the people. The great Tory critic in his editorial

chair, the quiet clergyman in his priestly robe, became incorporated with upper if not better classes; and the former especially had little sympathy with the section of society from which he sprung.

There have been fully as great men as these who have ennobled rather than left the ranks of the people. Not to dwell on Burns,—who, as he affectingly says, “was a poor man by birth and an exciseman by necessity,”—we have had in South Britain many eminent writers, “poor men by birth.” Such was Robert Bloomfield, whose “Farmer’s Boy,” “Rural Tales,” and “Mayday with the Muses,” are full of hearty appreciation of the beautiful and the good, and whose verse has an elegance that sufficiently attests he was in the best sense one of nature’s gentlemen. Far higher in the ranks of genius, though quite as lowly born, we must place Ebenezer Elliott—a soul of fire! claiming kindred with Burns in power and pathos. It has been objected to the bard of Sheffield that he selected political themes,—the Corn Laws and their consequences,—and that such themes never can be poetic. It must, however, be remembered, that poetry dwells like fire in the flint, and does not flash out till rightly smitten forth. Ebenezer Elliott was terribly in earnest; the wrongs and sorrows of the toil-worn operative were his own wrongs and sorrows. His



voice, awful in its distinctness, uttered the wail and curse of thousands. He did not speak in vain.

His poems on more general themes are equally powerful, and for many readers more interesting. What can be finer as a description of mountain scenery and a sudden storm than

WIN-HILL.

“ King of the Peak ! Win-Hill ! thou, thron’d and crown’d,  
 That reign’st o’er many a stream and many a vale !  
 Star-loved, and meteor-sought, and tempest-found !  
 Proud centre of a mountain-circle, hail !  
 The might of man may triumph or may fail ;  
 But, Eldest Brother of the Air and Light,  
 Firm shalt thou stand when demigods turn pale !  
 For thou, ere Science dawn’d on Reason’s night,  
 Wast, and wilt be, when Mind shall rule all other might.

“ But, crown’d Win-Hill ! to be a king like thee !  
 Older than death ! as God’s thy calm behest !  
 Only heaven-rivalled in thy royalty !  
 Calling the feeble to thy sheltering breast,  
 And shaking beauty from thy gorgeous vest,  
 And lov’d by every good and happy thing !  
 With nought beneath thee that thou hast not bless’d,  
 And nought above thee but the Almighty’s wing !  
 O glorious god-like aim ! Who would not be a king ?  
 \* \* \* \* \*

“ ‘ Blow, blow, thou breeze of mountain freshness blow ! ’  
 Stronger and fresher still, as we ascend

Strengthen'd and freshen'd, till the land below  
 Lies like a map! — On! on! those clouds portend  
 Hail, rain, and fire! — Hark, how the rivers send  
 Their skyward voices hither, and their words  
 Of liquid music! — See, how bluely blend  
 The east moors with the sky! — The lowing herds,  
 To us, are silent now, and hush'd the songful birds.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ High on the topmost jewel of thy crown,  
 Win-Hill! I sit bareheaded, ankle-deep  
 In tufts of rose-cupp'd bilberries; and look down  
 On towns that smoke below, and homes that creep  
 Into the silvery clouds, which far-off keep  
 Their sultry state! and many a mountain stream,  
 And many a mountain vale, ‘ and ridgy steep; ’  
 The Peak, and all his mountains, where they gleam  
 Or frown, remote or near, more distant than they seem!

“ There flows the Ashop, yonder bounds the Wye,  
 And Derwent here towards princely Chatsworth tends;  
 But, while the Nough steals purple from the sky,  
 Lo! northward far, what giant's shadow bends?  
 A voice of torrents, hark! its wailing sends;  
 Who drives yon tortured cloud through stone-still air?  
 A rush! a roar! a wing! a whirlwind rends  
 The stooping larch! The moorlands cry ‘ Prepare!  
 It comes! ye gore-gorg'd foes of want and toil, beware!’

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Storm! could I ride on thee, and grasp thy mane,  
 A bitless bridle, in my unburnt hand;  
 Like flax consum'd, should fall the bondman's chain,  
 Like dust, the torturers of each troubled land;  
 And Poland o'er the prostrate Hun should stand —

Her foot upon his neck, her falchion's hilt  
 Beneath her ample palm. Then every strand  
 Should hear her voice: 'Our bulwark is rebuilt,  
 Europe! but who shall gauge the blood these butchers  
 spilt?'

\* \* \* \* \*

"Thy voice is like thy Father's, dreadful storm!  
 Earth hears his whisper, when thy clouds are torn;  
 And Nature's tremour bids our sister-worm  
 Sink in the ground. But they who laugh to scorn  
 The trampled heart which want and toil have worn,  
 Fear thee, and laugh at HIM, whose warning word  
 Speaks from thy clouds, on burning billows borne;  
 For, in their hearts, his voice they never heard,  
 Ne'er felt his chastening hand, nor pin'd with hope de-  
 ferr'd.

"O Thou whose whispering is the thunder! Power  
 Eternal, world-attended, yet alone!  
 O give, at least, to labour's hopeless hour  
 That peace, which Thou deny'st not to a stone!  
 The famine-smitten millions cease to groan;  
 When wilt Thou hear their mute and long despair?  
 Lord, help the poor! for they are all thy own.  
 Wilt Thou not help? did I not hear Thee swear  
 That Thou would'st tame the proud, and grant their  
 victim's prayer?"

Another distinguished son of the people, well  
 described by Ebenezer Elliott, as

"Gentle Nature's stern prose bard,  
 The noblest peasant born,"

was William Cobbett. What a life was his!

Born at Farnham, in Surrey, 1766, of humble, industrious parents, he was successively a plough-boy, a hop-ground labourer, a copying clerk, a soldier, a teacher; then an author, a farmer, a member of parliament.\* His "Political Register," apart from its peculiar principles, is a valuable record of events during nearly thirty-three years of the present century. Public men and measures are there canvassed in a manner at once graphic and unscrupulous.

To the general reader his miscellaneous writings are the most interesting. Few prose works of description can compare, and none surpass, his "Rural Rides," written in a clear, unincumbered style, without a superfluous word, and yet always so grouping the scenes he describes that they make a picture for the reader. The very absence of ornament gives an air of freshness to his descriptions. They are like a green field, on which the eye is never weary of looking. His "Advice to Young Men" contains some admirable counsels as to personal habits in the outset of life. It deals, as, indeed, might be expected, from the plain, practical character of the author's mind, rather with the outer than the inner life; yet, when it is remembered how much an honourable and happy life must depend on attention to the practical de-

\* He represented Oldham, in Lancashire, in the Reformed Parliament, till his death, 1835.

tails of minor morals, the admonitions of one so competent to write from experience are of high value.

A self-taught man, he particularly excelled in a clear, sound, grammatical knowledge of his own and of the French language. His grammars, English and French, addressed to, or designed for, those who are engaged in the work of self-culture, are admitted to be of great practical utility. Extensively known as they are, they would be far more widely read if they did not so abound in political allusions. Politics were as the breath of life to Cobbett; he could not cease from them, whatever he did: they furnish illustrations for his grammars, point the moral of his admonitions, and supply the humorous or pathetic touches of his rural pictures.

Cobbett's "Register" was among the first of the cheap publications of the age. "Twopenny Trash" it was called contemptuously by his enemies. The stamp tax, however, put an end to the "twopenny trash," though not to the "Register."

The example of such men as we have named could not fail to give an impetus to the mind of the people at large. Literature means, perhaps, "Republic of letters" more in our age than at any previous time.

The judgment of an age upon itself is too much

like individual self-judgment to be relied on. Its fault is likely to be an over or under estimate, and not a just appreciation. Indeed, an age, like an oil painting, must be viewed from a distance to be justly estimated. Hence it is puzzling to a young reader, and not easy, indeed, to a reader of any age, to reconcile the different estimates that have appeared of the literary character of the present age; because, by some it has been spoken of as manifesting an activity and progress unparalleled; by others it has been charged with want of originality, and with extent of surface rather than depth.

Certain it is, if we look carefully, every age has its peculiar distinctive features; but we are too close to discern fully the effect of those of our own time. There are some points, however, in which it may fairly be said to differ from every other age. There is an intense *life* in the whole "body of the time." Society has a vitality and rapidity about it, to which no former period furnishes any parallel. If life is to be measured by actions, the term of life is now greatly lengthened. The right to think, though long conceded as a theory, was never so generally adopted as a practice as in the present time. This right has been used in reference both to metaphysical and physical investigation. Scientific triumphs have had much to do in originating and keeping up the activity

of the age. Time was, that a man's reputation for intellect depended mainly on his knowledge of the dialects and customs of obsolete nations. Now, a ready faculty of observation and construction has served to raise many a man to eminence, and to make him a benefactor to his kind. The manufactures, the locomotion, and the general habits of society, have altered more in the last fifty years than in any three centuries previously. Conveniences of life, that would have excited the gratitude and wonder of monarchs in old times, are now so familiar they fail to attract notice. The dreams of the poets as to the swiftness and the transformations of supernatural beings, have been excelled by the actual triumphs of the steam-engine, and the applications of electricity and of light. Never was there an age in which the conquest of mind over matter was so manifest. We harness fire as our steed, send a message to our friends with the rapidity of lightning, and make the sun itself our portrait-painter.

“Do we work our souls as nobly as our iron?” Does this triumph over matter help to guide mind to highest truth?—are questions more easily put than answered. The office of all knowledge is to contribute to true wisdom. If we, as a people, are more knowing than our ancestors, it is a terrible condemnation if we are not the wiser for our knowledge.

The aspects of literature must help us to consider our present position.

A casual glance at the last century certainly helps us to a belief that the present age is far more independent in matters of thought. There is as much difference of opinion on various topics as there ever was, but it is manifested with less acrimony. The language of controversy is not less strong, though it is now certainly more courteous. No one man, however great, in the present day, could rule the realms of literature and taste with such despotism as Dr. Johnson exhibited. Indeed, the most marked change that has taken place in the history of mind in the present age is the determination of writers to be untrammelled by the laws of opinion or of composition laid down by the critics of the last century. What may be termed the conventionalisms of literature have been broken down. We have seen that Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, departing from established rules of composition, gave to the public, early in the present century, poems in unusual and sometimes new measures, and defended their plan by reference to truth and nature, the two great teachers of the poet. They each resolved to write as they were prompted, and not on the models established by Dryden and Pope, and praised by Addison and Johnson. Wordsworth, in particular, held that communion with God,



nature, and his own soul, was the true consecration and mission of the poet; and that it mattered not how humble the subjects of poetry were, if they ministered to just and gentle thoughts. Thus, a serene quietude, a luminous stillness, pervades his poems. They require a meditative perusal; and therefore have seldom been such favourites with the young as with the mature and aged reader. These three poets certainly had the merit, apart from the excellence and beauty of their own compositions, of arousing inquiry as to the nature of poetry in the abstract; and a greater capability of feeling and judging of poetry has, in consequence, been infused into the general reader.

Sir Walter Scott, the greatest name in imaginative literature, did not, like the three before-mentioned poets, either invent new measures or select unusual themes. He went back to the olden time, and invested the chivalrous stories of the fifteenth and sixteenth with the refinement and grace of the nineteenth century. The old ballad, and the metrical legend, in irregular but most musical verse, were restored to a place in our modern literature; while a taste for the old poets themselves was revived, when it was seen how charming and picturesque were the modern antiques presented by a man who was as ardent an antiquarian as poet.

Miss Edgeworth has the honour of having suggested to Sir Walter Scott the idea of presenting

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some prose fictions illustrative of national character. Her racy descriptions of Irish life and manners induced him to write something descriptive of Scottish character; and, taking history as a general basis, he reared many a superstructure of great beauty upon it. The young reader, however, should always bear in mind, that Sir Walter Scott would not be tied down in his historical stories to the actual chronology of history, and therefore introduced characters into some scenes that were dead before the event he described. He wrote to elucidate history by descriptions of costume, manners, and conversation—not to supersede it by an accurate narrative of events.

The success of these works of Sir Walter Scott was marked by two effects on our general literature. The old, foolish, gossiping stories, tasteless and dull as they were improbable, went entirely out of fashion: people could no longer read merely for a story, they required something more intellectual; so the silly absurdities of the “*Minerva Press*” class of novels ceased. The second effect was, that numbers of writers who previously would have thought it degrading to compose novels, now that this department of literature was raised, turned their attention to it, and for a long time “*fiction*,” to use the comparison of a celebrated female writer, was “*the Aaron’s rod of literature, swallowing up all the rest.*”

The controversy caused by the different theory of poetry, from that of the Lakists, supposed to be held by the three eminently great and popular poets, Byron, Campbell, and Moore, could not fail to be beneficial ; for if it did no more than lead people to the sentiment expressed by Klopstock, in a conversation with Wordsworth, "that there are different subjects for poetry, and that poets are not willing to be restricted in their choice," it helped to enlarge the mind, and to teach the first principles of criticism. Perhaps the three poets named may be regarded as having more than any others of their time adhered, in outward form, to the polished ease and correctness of Pope. But the spirit of their writings is all their own.

The age has been peculiarly rich in humorists ; and it is to the credit of the morals and manners of the time that humour never before was so free from all that offends the delicate and sensitive mind. Graceful pleasantry, playful wit, racy humour, unmixed with levity, bitterness, or coarseness, may be regarded as a characteristic of the age. There can be no doubt that women, now forming so large a part of the reading public, has had an influence in restraining the licence which wits in former periods allowed themselves. A brilliant essayist\*, referring to Congreve and the other

\* Macaulay.

writers of English comedy, alleges, that one reason of their coarseness was, that women were so seldom readers that men never wrote in expectation of addressing them. It is fair, therefore, to conclude, that the improvement in reference to the humorous writers of the present age is due to the mental influence of women. It is but just to admit that the wit of modern times is too often a mere play on words, and consists of grotesque forms of expression, cant and class terms, and bad spelling.

During the previous century many infidel writers arose, both in England and France; and, as with overweening vanity they complimented themselves on their originality and freedom from prejudice, several persons, young men more particularly, thought that infidelity was a proof of great intellectual powers; so that, from sheer vanity rather than conviction, many were self-deluded into a gloomy soul-destroying scepticism. To meet this evil, several religious writers of high intelligence arose, who presented the truths of religion in unanswerable argument; and, though it cannot be said that infidelity was entirely annihilated, yet the arrogant delusion that to be a sceptic was to be something intellectually superior to the Christian was completely overthrown. When the mighty minds that have given in their testimony of child-like reliance on the sacred truths of Scripture are

remembered, it is marvellous that any such vain boast should have ever for a moment been indulged by any mind.

Religious investigation has formed a considerable part of the intellectual activity of the age. The grounds of belief have been carefully examined, and an intelligent carrying out of the Apostle's injunction, "Be able to give a reason of the hope that is in you," has been more diligently attended to than at any previous time. It would, indeed, be shameful if this were not the case, for there never was a period when so many aids to the study of divine truth were within the reach of the humblest student. It is to be hoped that the conviction which enlightened minds must feel, that while there is such diversity of mind there cannot be uniformity of conviction or opinion, has the effect of producing greater liberality of thought and catholicity of spirit.

A demand for earnestness rather than polish, for vigour rather than beauty, in the literature of the present time, has had a good effect in directing the mind of readers more to matter than to manner. Style is not disregarded, but the truth is more than ever manifest, that the thought of a sentence is its gem; the words, however beautiful and appropriate, are merely the setting. To think right thoughts, therefore, is now considered far more essential than to write fine phrases. An

epigram no longer serves instead of an argument, and a polished lie for a homely truth.

While of course it is possible to enumerate our poets and *leading minds*, yet the numbers of admirable writers in every department of literature is now so great, that any thing like critical analysis, however rapid, is beyond the range of a work like this. A reading public makes a demand so vast and continuous, that it has caused a supply unprecedented. The press of our time is as great a marvel as the railroad or the electric telegraph.

One cause that has contributed to this appetite for information has been the establishment of popular associated institutions, town libraries, reading and book societies for literary intercourse and improvement. In all former times institutions of a literary or scientific character were meant for the very few, not for the many. Even public libraries were restricted as much in their readers as in their contents. The diffusive form that intelligence assumed, when periodical literature became established in the land, was favourable to the rise and progress of collateral and associated plans for diffusing knowledge. Literary and scientific institutions, intended for the educated classes, but without the restrictions adopted by learned societies, began to prevail early in the present century. To these were added, in process of time, Mechanics' Institutions. Dr. Birkbeck, who

founded one in Glasgow (1800), finding it worked well, determined, in 1824, to establish a similar institution in London, and, aided by Lord Brougham and others, succeeded. This plan was imitated throughout the kingdom, until now in most towns, and even in many villages, there are associations of a similar character, or at all events libraries and book societies. Never was the principle of association more excellently employed, as to secular things, than in thus enabling all classes to partake in the benefits of knowledge. It is true these institutions have not accomplished all they designed for the class they more especially hoped to benefit, but that very great good has been done no one can deny. And what they have effected for a class whose preliminary education fitted them to enjoy the benefits afforded, certainly points to the conclusion that elementary instruction of the poorest should be promoted.

The circumstance that our literature is now so extensively contributed to by female writers, has done much to increase the educational opportunities of women generally, and to stimulate a desire for knowledge, and a sense of *the duty* of self-culture. While the duties of women, as to the demands of domestic life, are the same as ever, and are neither to be neglected nor superseded, it has been found that a well-stored mind does not unfit for those duties, but gives a higher idea of their importance ;

and therefore many old prejudices that condemned women to ignorance have passed away. They are generally admitted to the privileges of popular institutions for the diffusion of knowledge, on equal or even more favourable terms than persons of the opposite sex. So that now it has certainly come to pass that knowledge is free to all, at least as to acquisition.

The danger now is that these privileges will be neglected or misused. Young people roam in libraries and read at every opportunity; but they too often neglect all system in their reading, and therefore are not much the wiser after all. No person could in print, without a charge of obtrusive invidiousness, point out the authors it would be well for young persons to read carefully and systematically; but the departments of knowledge on which information should be gained might be easily referred to. Theology, morals, science, history, biography, travels, occasionally enlivened by the highest and loveliest efforts of the imagination, would comprise a plan of reading that could not fail to store the mind with correct principles and general knowledge.

It is a good rule whenever a sterling book of established reputation is begun, to go right through with it. Cursory, snip-snap reading is the vice of this rapid, hurrying age. A good appetite without a good digestion would soon bring the



physical system into disorder; and it is so extensively with the mind. We are, perhaps, gratified by that which we only taste, but we are nourished only by that which we digest.

We should never lose sight of the object we have in view in our reading—improvement. We may seek this object in many different ways, as taste and opportunity direct, but we must, if we are just to ourselves, never fail to seek it. “What am I the better for having read this book?” should be as frequent a question as “Am I pleased with it?” What has it told me that I did not know before? what thought has it suggested? what virtue has it strengthened? what fault corrected? Those who read with this self-examining spirit must read to profit.

The pages here brought to a close have not only attempted to trace the course of the stream of literature, but have aimed at guiding the reader, the young reader especially, to its deep still waters, and its green and flowery banks. No one looking on a guide-book, would be careless of the places it described; but would use it as an indicator of what, but for it, might not have been noted, or have been passed over with transitory interest.

THE END.

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